Curating Performing Arts

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Frakcija



The concept of the curator has become in recent years more and more influential. But while it has been heavily discussed, criticized and theorized within the visual arts, the function of the programmer, producer, curator in the performing arts remains strangely un-debated. Even though programming in dance, theatre, performance has undergone fundamental changes over the last decades there are barely any texts that reflect on its specific role in art production, reception and market.

This edition of Frakcija wants to give a starting signal: In original contributions renowned theorists and practitioners lay out a field of possible discussion, by circling around this job with the unclear profile. While Beatrice von Bismarck and Hans Ulrich Obrist refer to curatorial practices within the visual arts (and point out the dramaturgical, choreographic, theatrical strategies they use), other texts move on from comparison to defining the specifics of the genre itself: Rebecca Schneider looks at the roots of what the live in live arts, and what the curate in curating means. Florian Malzacher understands the curator as a specialised and necessary sub-group of program-makers and tries to define its functions. Goran Sergej Pristaš talks about his personal experience of the cultural contexts and figures in Western Europe and beyond, while Elke Van Campenhout, Christine Peters and Mårten Spångberg demand new models of contemporary curating, of dealing with art and artists.

The impulse for this edition of Frakcija came from artists though: Tea Tupajić and Petra Zanki introduce via a letter to a curator their *Curators' Piece*, one of the surprisingly rare works within performing arts that deals with its very own means of production and economy. Other artists contributions by Jan Ritsema, Dan Perjovschi, Rabih Mroué, and deufert&plischke not only mark the fact that there are two sides in this game, but also offer different approaches to the topic. All photographs are taken from the ongoing project *Empty Stages* by Tim Etchells and Hugo Glendinning: Spaces of possibility but at the same time just architecture, not more and not less than a container for something perhaps to come.

It is important to also talk about names, as Hannah Hurtzig points out in a conversation with Gabriele Brandstetter, Virve Sutinen and Hilde Teuchies. Thus this magazine ends with a Curators' Glossary which covers key terms related to the job – in very individual ways: 25 of the most influential curators of the field give short subjective insights into their work.

Even though the primary aim of this edition is to investigate and define the unique particularities of curating in the various forms of time-based art – theatre, dance, performance – this issue touches in its core the very questions of performing arts production itself and wants to offer material for a critical discourse for further and broader reflection. What does it mean to choose, who chooses, what implications do these choices have? How are contexts produced? How do these contexts produce an added value? What is the role of the performing arts in our affect-driven service economy? What is its relationship to discourse, how does it become political? In what environment does art exists, what environments would it like to create?

Performing arts were always the main artistic means to ask the basic and the urgent questions of society: a political medium per se. It is time to ask ourselves what our own roles in art, society and economy are: As artists, as curators, as audience.

Florian Malzacher, **Tea Tupajić** & **Petra Zanki**

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Bethnal Green WMC,
London





about programmers and curators

jan ritsema

do you see a difference between:
to prescribe (to pro-gram) or to cure?
i like to decide myself, about the way i want to be cured
i don't mind when someone prescribes me things
i always see this as a proposition i can take or leave
but it is different when someone wants to cure me
it seems as if i have no choice anymore
i am right isn't it?
but
and there is another devolution
a devolution is an evolution but backwards
with the word 'cure'
curare is a substance taken from certain plants (lianes) in the amazonian forest
especially *chondodendron tomentosum* and *strychnos toxifera*
they provoke a paralyzation of the muscles
it has been used by indigenous indo-americans and aboriginals to endure the arrows
quite some pro-grammers, curators as they like to be called today,
go for this paralyzing,
paralyzing the brain muscle
by curating known aesthetics
by curating the recognizable
maybe
pro-grammers, curators as they like to be called today,
could listen to the album *difficult to cure* (1981) by the british hardrock group *rainbow*
and just prescribe the yet undefinable
the what they themselves don't know yet
the uncurable
the uncuratable
the impossible

the horrible
we not only 'don't need heroes (tina turner) anymore
(luckily enough)
we 'don't need doctors either
we need risk-takers
who don't know whether their actions will kill or cure
who don't mind
who only want to move and keep things moving
and finally
art and the artists will save them
instead of (what the curators think and pretend) that it would be the other way around
but
there is a problem
art looks nowadays very often like art,
and artists look very often like artists
because the army of artists identified themselves so much with the cures proposed by the curators,
that the world lacks art and artists who could save these curators
conclusion
art is lost
and
so are the curators
but
le roi est mort vive le roi
so
let's go, both, hand in hand artists and programmers for a fresh beginning
a renaissance
of art that does not look like anything anymore
anything anymore
anything anymore

Centrepoint,
London





Cause & Result

About a job with an unclear profile, aim and future

Florian Malzacher

Translated from the German by Marina Miladinov

What comes first
determines
what can happen
next, and what
happens
next
alters what has
come
before

Jonathan Burrows & Matteo Fargion *Cheap Lecture*

Around the artist, around art. Among the professions that are rather close to art or even right within, but not artistic themselves, not directly artistic themselves, the curator has the youngest and most unclear profile. In the visual arts, where he became a star within a short time, he is standing in the midst of a controversy that is essentially driven by himself. In the field of dance, theatre, and performance however, he is still rare and, above all, mostly unheeded. Which is all the more surprising since he has long played an influential role in independent performing arts, defining and organizing art, discourses, formats, and finances.

Terminology as scarce commodity

Well, it belongs to the profile of many jobs in the free and experimental international theatre (that is, theatre outside of the fixed structures and relatively fixed aestheticisms of the repertory city theatres, which are mostly active only within the limits of their countries and languages) that there is actually no clear profile. What does a dramaturge do without a drama, an art critic without a catalogue of criteria, a dancer without dance, a theatre director without a text that should be staged? But the theatre curator does not even have an outdated model of reference at his disposal: the terminology and job description has been borrowed from the visual arts, as their particular way of dealing with formats, with art and artists, and with economies and audiences, suddenly seemed transferrable.

Before that, in the 1980s and early 1990s, a good part of the independent theatre landscape had changed considerably: radically new aestheticisms, and later also new working structures and hierarchies within ensembles, collectives, and companies came into existence along with new or newly defined theatre houses and festivals. Above all, the concept of the *kunstencentra*, which with their open, mostly interdisciplinary approaches paved the way for many of today's scene-heroes and re-classified the audience, spilled over from Belgium and the Netherlands into the neighbouring countries and made it possible to reinvent theatre as an institution.

With them arrived a new, often charismatically filled professional profile: that of the programme maker (who, depending on the institution, would be officially called artistic director, *Intendant*, dramaturge, manager, producer). As the name already shows, the accent was on taking a grip on things, on making. A generation of men of action defined the course of events – and even if their attitude seems occasionally patriarchal from today's point of view, the scene was actually less male-biased than the society and the city theatres around it. This generation of founders, which at the same time redefined and imported the model of the dramaturge, established some remarkably efficient and stabile structures and publics: it was a time of invention and discovery, which has had obvious repercussions into the present day. Professional profiles were created and changed – also that of the artist himself.

“Radically new aestheticisms, working structures and hierarchies came into existence along with new or newly defined theatre houses and festivals.

This foundation work was largely completed by the mid-1990s at the latest (at least in the West), not least because financial resources were becoming more scarce. What followed was a generation of former assistants, of critical apprentices so to say, and with them a period of continuity, but also of differentiation, reflection, and well-tailored networks, of development and re-questioning new formats – labs and residencies, summer academies, *parcours*, thematic mini-festivals, emerging artist platforms… The difficulty of the plains replaces that of the mountains, the struggle over quality criteria and discourses replaces the often socio-cultural founding-impetus to let very different cultures coexist equally.

The picture is still dominated by transition models, but the strong specialization of the arts (exemplified by the visual arts), the subsequent specialization of the programme makers and dramaturges, and a generally altered professional world – which also here increasingly relies on free, independent, as well as cheaper labour – along with increasingly differentiated audiences, again require a different professional profile: the curator is a symptom of these changes in art, as well as in society and the market. His working fields are theatre forms that often cannot be realized within the established structures; artistic handwritings that always require different approaches; a scene that is more and more internationalized and disparate; the communication of often not easy aestheticisms; transmission and contextualization. Last but not least, the curator is the link between art and the public.

Whether the stolen term curator is the most suitable here for this job or not is currently a popular point of dispute and, above all, polemics. However, there is more at stake than personal gain in distinction to programme makers, who might not feel appreciated enough. And the difficulty of naming and defining this new job is just symptomatic for a genre in which terminology is a scarce commodity anyway and which does not even have a reasonably good name itself: Experimental theatre? Free theatre? All biased

or misleading. Time-based art? Live art? At least attempts at defining the genres within different borders. Devised theatre, that is, a theatre that must evolve again and again from scratch? New theatre – after all these years? Postdramatic theatre? At least one successful, marketable keyword. But how does the kind of dance that has been so influential in recent years, but is also still looking for a suitable name, fit in here: conceptual dance?

As a clandestine romantic, one might consider the missing slate to be a subversive gain and fashion it that way in the first place – an elitist thinking in niches, but out of defensive resignation rather than self-confidence. In fact, the lack of terminology indicates above all a lack of articulation, a lack of communication not limited to advertising, a lack of more than purely intra-disciplinary discourse in the performing arts, which remain amazingly speechless in this respect. Thus it again signals the necessity of curatorial work, which – as can be seen in the visual arts, where catalogues, for example, are an integral part of almost all exhibitions – consists to a large extent of verbalization, communication, and discussion. As a part of the central task to create contexts.

Concrete contexts

Contexts. Links between artists, artworks, audiences, cultures, social and political realities, parallel worlds, discourses, institutions. It is not by chance that the curator in the visual arts sphere emerged at a time when artworks often no longer functioned without a context, refused to function without a context. When they on the contrary began to define themselves precisely through their contexts, when they began to search or even create them, and to critically question the institutions that surrounded them. When the idea of an auratic artwork and auratic author disappeared and was replaced by art that was no longer understandable without relations. Additionally, the amount of information about and from our world and the complexity of art has risen exponentially – as has the amount of art produced. The curator was both a cause and a result of this development. Thus, the frequently expressed wish of artists in the fields of dance and theatre (and quite logically much more seldom in the visual arts) that their work be presented unexplained and un-contextualised, standing there alone, without a framework, moves along the thin line between justified fear of reduction, simplification, and domestication on the one side, and the misjudgement of the ways their work functions on the other. The muteness of the genre extends to all those who participate in it.

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Thus, good curatorial work would consist not in damaging the autonomous art work in its autonomy, but on the contrary, in reinforcing it, yet without considering it untouchable, too weak, needy of protection. How near should the framework get to the artwork, how closely should one be juxtaposed to the other, how charged should the surrounding be: these are central points of discussion between artists and curators in exhibition art – but they are just as valid when making programmes for a festival or a theatre house. Contexts can offer artworks a proper reception – but they can also incapacitate them.

And yet, theatre and dance performances are not paintings, transportable artefacts, or even clearly defined installations. They are almost always more demanding, in terms of staff, space, time, finances. That makes it at least more difficult – if not impossible – to commission a thematically

fitting artwork than in the other arts. Thematic postulations can reasonably only be derived from artistic production, occasionally perhaps through the specific inspiration of an artist. In this way, thematically too narrow programmes are, at least on a large scale, barely imaginable. But then again, aren't exhibitions in the visual arts that use artworks primarily for proving their own theses also rather repulsive? (It is from a similar reason that quite a lot of art/culture/dance/theatre-science-related literature is also actually useless.)

Besides, a performance normally requires the undivided attention of its recipients during a period of time that is defined by the artists. Thus, in the theatre a visitor can barely and even more seldom spontaneously influence the order in which he will see the artworks at a festival. Even if the programming accepts (much too rarely!) the task of putting the presented pieces in a relationship to each other, of seeing them as mutually commenting or complementing, of intertwining them with exhibitions, theory, or music, one can only understand the whole as a whole, if at all, on paper – when reading the program book.

But the problem is not only in the sluggishness and temporal intensity of the medium; rather centuries-long programme pragmatics, which have to do more with casting possibilities, duration of the performance, and the alleged obligation of a certain range of offerings than with aesthetic issues, has prevented the audience, the critics, and also most of the programme makers from developing an eye for interrelations. Even the artists themselves cultivate an isolated view: they are hardly ever used to or interested in grasping their own work in context, to put themselves in relation with others (except in small reference groups). The singular work of art is – even if this is often denied for discursive reasons – still the prevailing model in practice.

Few exhibitions have the complexity and unpredictability of a festival. As a social form of art, theatre will always have a different attitude towards pragmatism and compromise, will need more time and space, and therefore stay inferior to other genres regarding agility. In an age of speed and spacelessness that might be a market flaw, just as it was an advantage in other times. But however cumbersome and relatively small the possibilities of contextualization may be within a festival or a season condensed to knots, they can also be very effective. The fact of not-being-able to-control is a challenge that must be faced in a productive way, since not-wanting-to-control in this case only produces boredom.

So what can one see if one attends, on one evening, first a conceptually clear, but supposedly hermetic work by deufert&plischke and then a supposedly ludicrous Cunningham-piece, performed by the Norwegian old-chaotic Baktruppen? How does it change one work retrospectively and the other in advance? (At least an exhibition curator rarely has the possibility of steering the order of reception so precisely.) What influence does it exert on the reception if a *leitmotif* or a theme is offered as the focus? What reference points can be given for an artwork – perhaps also historically, at least on paper or video? What contexts of experience are created for the spectators already by the very choice of space, the point of time, the graphic design, the advertising strategies? Is it possible not only to scatter theoretical postulates like parsley over the programme, but also actually mix them in?

These are only some arbitrary examples of how good contexts and focuses can be created – if so through the elaboration of smaller sections or agglomerations/knots in the programme as a whole. After all, biennials and museums are usually no adroit ships as well – and yet they play increasingly

often with their temporal axis, with the idea of the performative, the social. The fact that the figure of the exhibition maker – primarily and almost synonymous with the new type of curator, for example Harald Szeemann – became so important in the 1970s is due not least to the fact that the exhibition increasingly became a happening itself, sided or permeated by accompanying events, occasionally changing, understanding itself within time. Szeemann compared his work quite early with that of a theatre director. In the 1990s, art was frequently adopting the definition of the exhibition framework and discovering itself as a social space: Nicolas Bourriaud has termed it "relational aesthetics" and Maria Lind speaks of "performative curating". It is hardly possible to penetrate more deeply into the neglected core business of the theatre.

So this attention towards the arch, towards the dramaturgy of programming, is also an attempt at recovering lost terrain for theatre as a form of art. A course of events, a change of tempo, a change of intensity, a change of viewpoint. Even if barely any spectator can follow such dramaturgies in their entirety, they are nevertheless perceptible. One can walk through a festival like through a landscape. Some things are accidental, others are obvious. To linger or to go on, to grasp things intuitively or turn them over intellectually. The phantom of the supercurator, the *über*-curator, boldly creating his own piece out of other people's artworks, is not to be feared in the performative domain anyway. On the contrary, there is rather a lack of courage for imparting meaning at all – and not least because of modesty, but out of fear from the task.

Local context plays a role here more than in other arts; even the rather small audience that is interested in advanced forms of theatre is far less informed about the actual art field as a whole than its counterparts in the visual arts, film, or music: it travels less and its artworks are more difficult to access, respectively not reproducible in catalogues. As a rule (except for a few big cities), it is a single venue or a single festival that alone defines the horizon of the audience (as well as that of the local professional critics). The terrain of its judgement is paradoxically demarcated by the curator himself – only the art that he is showing actually exists. Thus, international artworks are forcedly localized and placed into relation with that which is familiar. The state of art is different in each town. Therefore, a local programme maker has a quite considerable influence; he not only sets the artworks into a given discourse, more than in the other arts he creates that discourse himself for his own environment (at best in discrepancy to his predecessors). Thereby the history and profile of his house or festival plays a role, and naturally so does the level of the local performing artists' scene (if existing and worth mentioning at all) and the state of development of the bordering arts in town – as well as the specific structure, openness, and the level of education of the regional audiences.

Criteria and compromises

Whether locally or internationally, in the end it's clear: it's about choice, about defining who is allowed to be a part of it, allowed to produce and present, allowed to earn money. Programme makers have a function in the art market and however much their opinions may differ, together they delineate the limited field. Who they don't see, who they refuse to see, has – at least internationally – almost no chance of being seen. At the same time,

never before has so much art been produced, so many artists emerged. While the budgets shrink, more and more schools, masters programs, university departments are being founded and producing more and more artists, mostly without considering what this overproduction may produce in itself. In terms of market, of quality, but also with regards to the personal situations of the former students, who are often not needed, not wanted and not seldom also simply not good enough to survive in the highly competitive market. The task of organising this field, the task of playing the bad guy has been delegated: curating means excluding and this excluding has existential consequences for artists.

So what are the criteria for such a selection? Yes, of course: good art, bad art. What we consider as such. Defined by education, experience, taste. By opinion. By the discourses we believe in. Even that narrow borderline area of experimental theatre, which we have chosen for our field of activity, is the result of a far-reaching decision.

They are difficult to name, these criteria, and they consist of various aspects. What good art is, that is anyway not possible to formulate here and *en passant*. But it is not even central: the reproach (made by those artists or spectators who disapprove of the choice) is anyway mostly not that curators had the wrong criteria. But none at all. That compromise, politics, aping, or craving for admiration is what actually writes the programme. That it is either too narrow or too broad.

“In the end it’s clear: it’s about choice, about defining who is allowed to be a part of it, allowed to produce and present, allowed to earn money.

For sure, it is a thin line indeed between dogmatism and arbitrariness. It defines itself through a clear style, a recognisable handwriting perhaps, through coherency of the programme, through a dramaturgy of procedure, through relationships. Through stringency. Of course it’s true: just as most city theatres put together their program out of all kinds of art for all kinds of audiences, thus also most international festivals and venues are just as well marked by a difficult to discern mixture of conviction and pragmatism.

The arguments for keeping it somewhat broader are numerous, and all programme makers are schooled in them: not excluding any segment of the public, creating contexts, placing more audacious pieces aside next to more popular ones, visitor numbers, ticket sales, tolerance towards other artistic approaches, financial difficulties, and more. Indeed, it doesn’t help anyone if a curator wants to prove with his program primarily his own courage – eventually at the cost of the artists. To establish and maintain a festival, to bind an audience, to win allies, and thus to create a framework also for artworks that are more consequential, more audacious, and more cumbersome is important. Especially since free spaces for art are becoming fewer and fewer, since the struggle of all programme makers for the survival of their programmes is becoming tougher and tougher. And since the belief that good art is only what nobody likes is a transparent form of artists’ self-protection.

And yet, what is the use of maintaining that what should actually be maintained if it is no longer visible? If it is no longer legible, what is the necessary and compellable in the midst of the pragmatic? The model of the curator is also a counter-model of the cultural manager, who values many things, who stakes off a broad field of creativity and artistic activities, whose aim is, after all, socio-cultural. Curatorial work also means deciding clearly for oneself what is good and what is bad. And knowing why.

But a good programme does not consist simply or necessarily only of good performances. On the one side, the decision in favour of co-productions and against merely shopped guest performances is immensely important in terms of cultural policy. But it is also a decision for risk, the results

imponderable; the right decisions can lead to a bad festival if one reads it only with respect to its results rather than its endeavours. On the other side, it is about creating internal relationships – even if a festival does not give itself a thematic red thread. Whether a programme is well thought out depends on the combination of different formats, aestheticisms, and arguments within a nevertheless very clearly outlined profile. But it also depends on the supposedly more pragmatic, but often no less dramaturgical considerations, which can play a considerable role in the beauty of a programme: for it can indeed happen that a performance is simply too long for a particular slot. Or too short. Or needs a different sort of stage. That it is the wrong genre. Thematically or aesthetically too similar to another show. Or too different. And yet, if it is worth it, one will probably find a solution. And yes, one must also fill in the slots: young, entertaining, political, conceptual, new, established... But there is also this: as soon as one stumbles across a piece that one wants to present by all means, one will quickly forget about this basic structure. If one is left with some spare money, of course.

Moreover, the local question belongs to the list of possible criteria: what possibilities are there for changing or influencing the scene of a town in terms of infrastructure – but also for presenting it, for giving it visibility and capacity for confrontation and growth. Every curator will say: one must primarily think in terms of quality. And yet, consciously or not, he will measure with a double standard. There is a thin line here as well: without local and also sustainable effects, an internationally oriented theatre house or festival will largely remain without impact and without backing in hard times. And vice versa: even the finest motives can soon turn into provinciality and lack of significance beyond the region.

“The model of the curator is also a counter-model of the cultural manager, who values many things, who stakes off a broad field of creativity and artistic activities, whose aim is, after all, socio-cultural.

While artistic work lives off of consistency and the greatest possible resistance to compromise, a festival programme, a seasonal programme, already even a small *parcours*, will always carry compromise within it like a birthmark. It is also for this reason that the curator is not an artist. This discrepancy is essential and often painfully indelible. Not only because curators are not seldom too ready for concessions. And not only because artists rarely make good curators: their view is always either to narrow (since they are guided by their own aesthetic intransigence) or too broad (since they are guided by social and solidary thoughts and feelings).

There is no reason why compromise should be romanticized with heroic pathos of action (“The show must go on”). But it will always remain a subject of conflict – especially where the art itself is existential, radical, ready to take risks. The quest of the absolute will bump against the necessity of presenting a turn-key product in the end. All the new modules of processual work, all those labs and residencies, are merely vents that eventually miss the real problem: it is not about not being willing to finish, being able to finish. It is that “finished” should be defined differently for each project.

What market?

As a programme maker, one relegates a part of the constraints one is unable to absorb himself to the artists. So, where is the limit? How long should one fight, when should one give up? How long is it good to preserve something, even if reduced, and when is it better to withdraw consequently? What is hasty obedience to politics and money? And what is litigant quixotism?

The market of independent theatre, and eventually theatre as such, is a well-cushioned one, mostly regulated through public money and foundations. In recent times, more and more sponsors have come into play, but in Europe their role is still mostly too limited to have an influence on the programme that would be worth mentioning: the fact that the Dublin Fringe Festival recently – since the emergence of a vodka producer as its main sponsor – changed its name into Absolut Fringe is an unusual case, perhaps heralding the future. Mostly the market is too small, the audience too marginal, the profit too limited, and the genre not sexy enough for investors. Also the volatile medium is rather unsuitable for the free art market: a performance cannot be bought and hung on a wall; it cannot be collected and doesn't gain value; it does not even impart a special status. That is why the artists of performance art (to be distinguished from the performing arts) have since the 1970s taken much care, together with their galleries, lest the supposedly ephemeral aspect of their work should be to their financial disadvantage – and have elevated video or photo documentation to the status of an artefact. Live art is performance art only for a brief moment before the immaterial work has clotted into an object. Theatre and dance makers, however, have almost no access to the free market, to that form of old age insurance. Which at least has the advantage that a curator (or art critic) cannot profit from the artworks of those artists whom he is promoting – we are spared this part of potential corruption.

On the other hand, many a visual artist will cast a look of envy to the subvention market of dance and theatre, since it seems to offer protection against the at times hysterical capitalism of the free art market. But the 80s are long gone: the subventions, anyway sinking, are increasingly spent on the maintenance of institutions that are weighty in real estate and personnel, and little is left for the slim independent scene. Whereas Western European countries can mostly still nibble at the achievements from the previous years, countries that could not knot an infrastructural security network are mostly left to the direct mercy of economy with its ups and downs. Protection of the subvention market is now unmasked as a cage, since one can hardly reach the means of the free market.

Surely there is an individual market value in theatre as well, surely it is important, of course, at which festival or in which venue one can be seen. But the demand regulates the price only to a certain degree, and the system of salaries remains comparably limited. Thus, the pressure of the market tips over its tops – it does not diminish for the artists, which are mostly precarious existences, not only as beginners. In the eyes of many artists, the curator, the programme maker, the intendant is – despite all amiability – part of a system of humiliation, which remains obscure, since its criteria are insufficiently reflected both by the curators and by the artists. Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard once wrote to his publisher Siegfried Unseld that the main problem was that each publisher had many authors, but each author had only one publisher. A theatre maker may have more than one producer – yet the unequal relationship of dependence, both economic and psychological, remains similar.

But obviously the programme makers are not independent either. The money that they distribute, or maybe invest, is obtained from their employers, mostly political ones (who again have it via taxes from people). They are rarely subjected to direct thematic pressure as for making specific programmes, at least in the West; politics and the public usually no longer exert their influence with regard to a specific type of art and a specific

discourse – barely anyone wants to be denounced as a conservative ignorant. The course is rather already set before the appointment or through the appointment of the artistic direction, then the discussion is usually reduced to economic factors, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and capacity utilization rather than to themes and aestheticisms. Since festivals and theatre houses are never cost efficient, they should at least be profitable on the other side: through urban marketing, image, tourism, number of overnight stays… And yet, engaging in an argument of indirect returns via Richard Florida's rhetoric of the "creative class" is dangerous for art institutions – on the one hand, the reduction of art to numbers can hardly be reversed, and on the other hand, economic arguments are often just pretextual, behind them stands the same old doubt as to the necessity of contemporary art, whose value has drastically sunken with the disappearance of the once mocked *Bildungsbuerger* from politics.

Programme makers are indeed responsible for the money that they have been entrusted with. Contractually, they are usually answerable to their public funders (at least indirectly, through politically appointed supervisory boards). And morally? To the artists? The art? The audience? The dilemma is intensified through the fact that there is, unlike in the world of museums, only seldom any difference between a director and a curator – especially freelancing and often changing curators with more independence and autonomy are rare. Thus, the political pressure of numbers is exerted directly on the person that creates the programme – mixed loyalties are unavoidable. The model of the curator is therefore decisively not that of a director; he is supposed to be responsible primarily to artists, art, specific discourses, and specific aestheticisms. Rather indeed an imaginary (perhaps naïve) figure than a reality. A construct, at least.

> **"It is precisely the theatre, that large machine for reflecting the world and oneself, that lacks sufficient reflection on the mechanisms to which we are exposed, mechanisms that we also use and sometimes generate by ourselves.**

The Starbucks coffee of art

But perhaps the problem lies anyway not so much in the fact that there is inequality, that there is injustice, that there is always a hidden agenda behind the association of curators and artists, that their relationship is always also an economic one. Perhaps the problem resides much more in the fact that it is precisely the theatre, that large machine for reflecting the world and oneself, that lacks sufficient reflection on the mechanisms to which we as programme makers are exposed, mechanisms that we, however, also use and sometimes generate by ourselves. That we tend to console ourselves quickly with the belief that without us it would all be even worse, that we are still taking the best out of a situation that is becoming worse.

We are products of what Slavoj Žižek has termed "cultural capitalism": we drink the Starbucks coffee of art and we are happy that a part of our money protects the rainforest (for example: conceptual dance, young artists, research). It is a pseudo-proper action, since eventually it primarily protects the system whose spikes we believe to be filing down. It is the same system in which we first produce the defects and then we try to alleviate them. We want power that should not be recognizable as such.

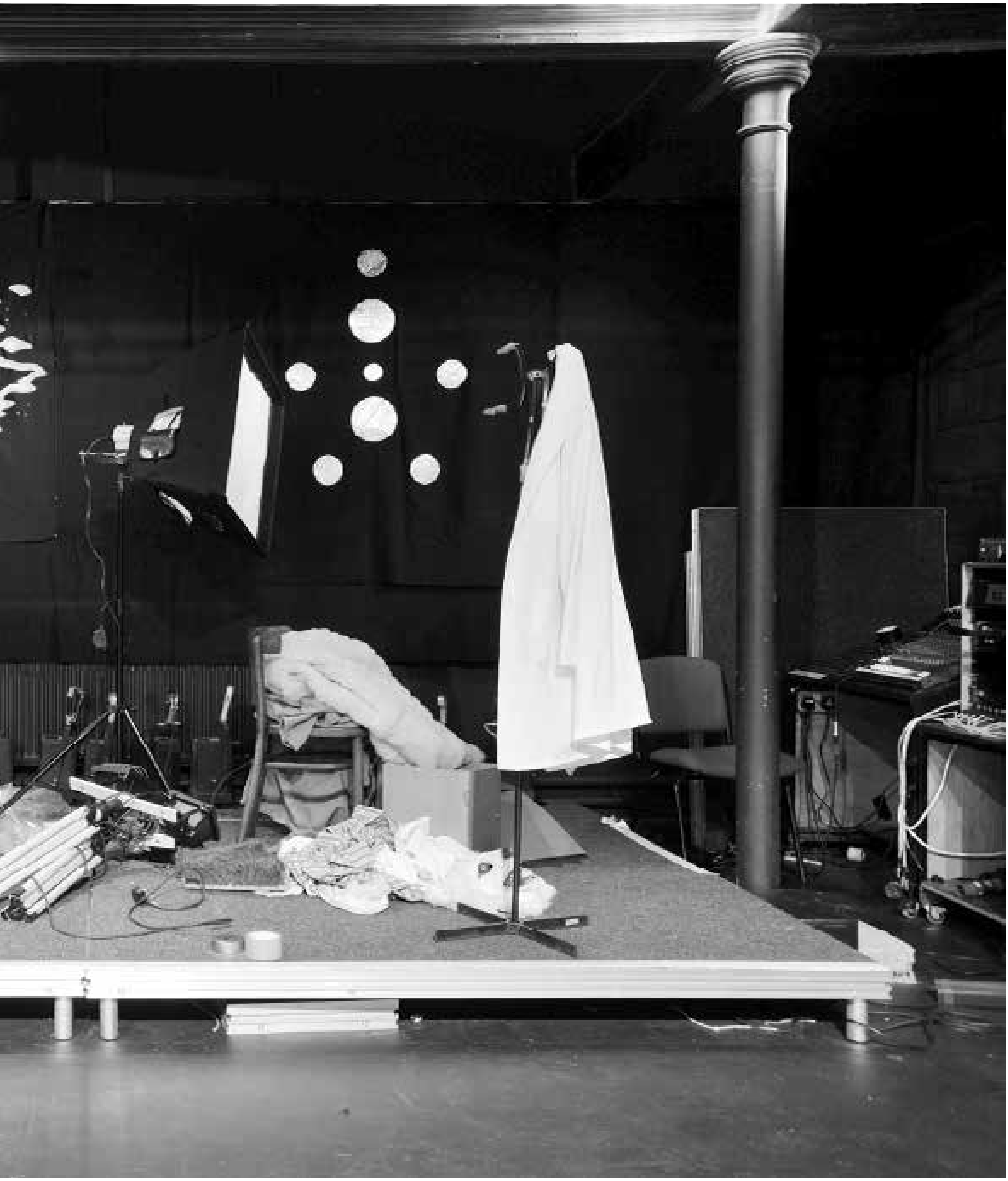
Thus, barely anything that the profession of the curator in the performing arts consists of is new in itself. And yet, it is important to see how the professional image differs from other genres, as well as from the programme maker of the founders' generation. From that of the production dramaturge. From that of the intendant, the artistic director, the manager.

The independent performing arts, these arts in a niche without a proper name, need articulation, contextualization, discourses, and publicity in order to be able to take their deserved place among the contemporary arts. The curator is one of the symptoms of a change. Seen that way, it is indeed a gain in distinction. But less so for the ones who call themselves curators than for an art form that should be finally recognized as more than an exotic accessory to city theatres and repertory companies.

— *For P.* —

Dukes Theatre,
Lancaster





"This curator-producer-dramaturge-whatever figure"

A conversation with dance theorist **Gabriele Brandstetter**, artist and curator **Hannah Hurtzig**, IETM president, former co-founder of Kiasma Theatre Helsinki and current director of Dansens Hus Stockholm **Virve Sutinen**, and former IETM co-ordinator and producer **Hilde Teuchies**.

There was a shift in the concept of programming or curating in the performing arts in the late eighties, early nineties in Europe: It was the time when all those production centres in Belgium, the Netherlands but similar also in Germany and other countries were founded, and festivals like Eurokaz in Zagreb were established. Hannah, you were co-founder of Kampnagel at that time – How did it come to that?

HURTZIG: I'm afraid my answer is quite disillusioning: The woman running cultural policy in Hamburg asked two other women – Mücke Quinckardt and me – to run Kampnagel and gave us 20,000 DEM for one year's programming. That was in 1985 and we had no experience whatsoever. We just started: one table, two chairs, a phone between us.
TEUCHIES: At the same time in Flanders a lot of art centres were founded – but the initiative did not come from some visionary person in the administration. It was people like you and me saying: "There are so many interesting changes in the art field and so many young artists who cannot find a platform. So we will create our own." An old socialist building was squatted in Ghent, a student meeting place at the University of Leuven was transformed into a performance space, a small old warehouse in the centre of Brussels was rented, etc. And so this is how the art centres Vooruit, STUK and Kaaitheater were started. Others soon followed …
HURTZIG: … well, I was a bit laconic about it. Of course Kampnagel was squatted as well, and taken hostage before the politics came in. And after that nevertheless we had to fight every year again against the wrecking ball.
TEUCHIES: In Flanders the margin for setting up new initiatives was relatively large. At that point we did not have a well-elaborated cultural policy and the cultural landscape was not defined by large and heavy art institutions. In that respect, the situation was completely different than the one in France or Germany. There was room for manoeuvring.

Moreover, the distance between people working on a grass-root level in the arts field on the one hand, and the decision makers on the other hand, was relatively small.
BRANDSTETTER: Perhaps that's the reason why there were so many innovations in theatre especially from Flanders and the Netherlands: the structures were very open and undefined. That changed something within the politics of culture, and in aesthetics as well: These centres were displaced; they blurred the differences between high and low culture and irritated the hierarchies and rankings within art. There was a growing fluidity and flexibility of thought and public awareness… So it really was an important historical change: The openness not to know what should happen, but working within the situation. And the role models of a program maker or a dramaturge is open now for definition: you are an organizer, you are a creative director, a program maker, a compilator…
HURTZIG: We considered ourselves dilettantes, total amateurs in all fields. And our Flemish colleagues were already ahead. When we didn't even know how to produce, Hugo De Greef had already started to talk about the ethics of the producer. The work they did in Belgium, and you can name other colleagues – and actually, we should talk about names, because names do matter in this story – the work they did, produced a climate where all these artists became visible: Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers, Luc Perceval, and many others, as well as dramaturges like Marianne Van Kerkhoven. And there was politics and competition. All together this was a Belgium success machine for over 10 years.
TEUCHIES: At that time, we did not talk about whether someone was a curator, a programmer or a dramaturge. Rather I would call people like Hugo De Greef (Kaaitheater), Erik Temmerman (Vooruit), Theo Van Rompay and Guido Minne (STUK) or Denis Van Laeken (Monty) responsible producers. If the artists needed a festival, Hugo would make a festival. If the artists needed a permanent space to work in Leuven, then Guido and Theo would go and develop a space. They were the people that discretely accompanied the artists.
HURTZIG: I don't agree. The appearance of the new producers-programmers on the stage was not discreet and shy. They created a different style of how to talk about theatre and dance, how to write about performance. Within a very short time they were running the discourse. If it came to policy of the arts, to the actual aesthetics of this policy and where to move from there, you're better talking to a producer than to an artist. This was a shift, a big entrance. They were providing better stages and better networks for artists, but they were also the authors of this new discourse. And through this they became very important and powerful and unconquerable.
TEUCHIES: I would add that they were functioning as sounding boards for a lot of young artists. In this sense they were something like mentors and this is not to be underestimated.
BRANDSTETTER: The really new thing was that there were people that didn't cling to old role models or traditional ideas of art. They allowed themselves to think without borders. So they could create open spaces of which perhaps even the artists did not think of. They created a new role model that was composed out of a lot of roles. And this atmosphere also created a new discourse – "Theaterschrift" for example was a journal that connected a multiplicity of voices and ideas. That it was published in four languages was also a signal not to think locally and to create new spaces for thinking.

What belongs in this context is that something within theatre studies also changed – for example, the Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen, which combined theory with practice, was founded in 1982. But there was also – to widen the geographical view – Knut Ove Arntzen with his theatre studies in Bergen, Norway. This is also where Sven Åge Birkeland founded his Teatergarasjen in 1984.

SUTINEN: Yes, but in Scandinavia it comes out of a very different reality. The whole society went through a profound change in Finland. Helsinki University Student House, Vanha,

The appearance of the new producers-programmers on the stage was not discreet and shy. They created a different style of how to talk about theatre and dance, how to write about performance.

was a central place for change in culture and arts. Raisa Rauhamaa, and Bo Isse Karsten were one of the first to visit IETM meetings. They were responsible for bringing Jan Fabre and La Fura dels Baus. These visits had a strong impact on my generation. Again it was the Cultural Centre which gathered the doers and the movers of music, dance, theatre... It is hard to imagine how closed and far out Finland was then. One could claim that a lot of the new culture was copied and imported, but it was also happening in the aftermath of punk, a strong DIY culture, environmental movement, and squatting, which empowered a whole new generation of artists, producers, and academics.

So it was quite different from the situation in Belgium for example, where the places were founded for an existing, strong artistic community?

SUTINEN: It might be characteristic for societies that are opening up that all this burst of activity, social, artistic, political, economical, is intertwined. And the change was also embraced by institutions like Helsinki Festival, which turned from a classical music festival to include not only other art forms, but also popular art.
HURTZIG: I would like to come back to this figure, this curator-producer-dramaturge-whatever figure and add a bit more chutzpah instead of glory to the portrait. We were also able and ready for clever management of our personal deficits. We invented new spaces and work to create discontinued studies, strange working biographies and failed schemes of life fit for the new times to come and to model new careers. And we were looking for auratic figures, who could give a theoretical, maybe more philosophical background for our practical work. And there was Ritsaert ten Cate, who founded the Mickery and later the artist school DasArts, and whom we could adore. The wish to connect theory and praxis was very strong from the beginning.
It would be actually interesting to reconstruct what Ritsaert was reading at that time. I remember Lloyd deMausse, David Riesman...
TEUCHIES: Ritsaert was, of course, also an artist himself. He was personally maybe not interested so much in theory, but he would surround himself with people who would back things up theoretically. This is for sure what Hugo De Greef was doing when he soon after engaged Marianne Van Kerkhoven to work with him at Kaaitheater. It was very unusual – and still is – to have a permanent dramaturge in a venue without a permanent ensemble. No other art centre in Flanders had it.
BRANDSTETTER: Even though there always seems to be a gap between theory and practice or even a resistance against theory, a very specific and new way to interweave them both emerged at that time. This was the starting point for something that has only now just became an important dimension of our reflection: how to use theory not just as a framework but to also think of it as part of practice and the other way around.
SUTINEN: Artists, producers, and academics, shared agency in the middle of huge political and social change. It was more straightforward, learning by doing, and DIY, which blurred all boundaries, and influenced what could be called the practice. It was during the 90s that performance studies offered us a way out of this quite reactionary practice. It was punk (ideology?) for many of us: the aim was to create independent, even autonomy, spaces, not open, but free. In my books, later in the nineties, this idealistic urge developed into a more sophisticated understanding of the postmodern state. Those theories came to the interest of artists, producers, and scholars.

There is still no specialized education for curators in the performing arts. While in the beginning it was the development of a totally new job profile, today young curators learn from role models, who they follow or dismiss.

TEUCHIES: In Flanders there were no schools or university departments to train dramaturges or producers or art managers. Many artists and all producers and dramaturges at

that time were self-educated. But recently theatre schools have drastically changed, and in the last five, seven years there has been a whole new bunch of young dramaturges starting their professional lives in the performing arts. Some of them work with production houses, some with companies, some will become programmers; many of them have been coached by Marianne Van Kerkhoven when taking their first steps in the profession. She is the godmother of Flemish dramaturgy.

SUTINEN: Well, as much as you could follow what Ritsaert ten Cate was reading, you should follow where Marianne Van Kerkhoven was travelling. Her impact was crucial in reforming the performing arts education. I am sure the Theatre Academy in Finland was not the only one where she implanted a different way of thinking about dramaturgy. For a little while dramaturgy became the key concept, or organizing principle for thinking. It was also applied to a wide range of practices, like curating or programming.

HURTZIG: I would be interested in knowing how the term curator, that we know from visual arts, has entered our system. For me this is still a bit mysterious. In the 1980s and early 1990s we were called programmers or program makers. That also included from time to time the production of a catalogue or a book, to have conferences, and to programme according to themes and topics. So why is it now suddenly called curating? Is it about distinction, upgrading the job?

TEUCHIES: In France or in Belgium the term curator isn't used in the performing arts field.

HURTZIG: Good to hear!

BRANDSTETTER: I would say that the term itself changed and the change concerns its meaning in visual arts as well. And it now not only appears in the performing arts but also in other disciplines. So is it only an indicator of the delineating between the different arts and the different discourses? Or is there something interesting or new as well? I think it might be that curating in the performing arts brings in a way of choreographic thinking into the programming. This could mean to conceive the curating process as a form of research: as an endeavour that is exploratory, collaborative and dynamic. And it could mean that we rethink the strategies of curating in terms of choreography: in terms of composing space, objects and bodies, in opening paths and structures of participation and placement through movement. Since we do not have established criteria for these transformative processes, this could be the challenge for a process of exploration within or as curating.

Originally the curator was mainly an archivist and collector, from the fifties onward the idea of the exhibition maker became popular – which led to the concept of the curator as we understand it today. In our field, with all the houses and festivals that were founded mainly in the last thirty years, people are naturally trying to define their own role in these structures – and there the term curator offers interesting possibilities.
Virve, you run a theatre within the institution of the contemporary visual arts museum Kiasma. Can you describe the difference in curating?

SUTINEN: I don't think there is much of a difference in terms of research and content development, and in Kiasma in the early years it was often done together in a team of curators and producers. The fine arts field has traditionally been quite academic, upper class, and international, while Finnish theatre has had a strong nationalistic ethos, and close ties with the people's movement and with the left. This historical hierarchy was challenged when new generations of interdisciplinary artists walked into the institutions and used any available context, space or situation suitable for their vision. Within a structure like Kiasma these differentiations became meaningless.

HURTZIG: But for obvious reasons you cannot curate a performance festival like an exhibition, we cannot go back in time, it's complicated to recreate or re-enact work, you cannot turn this into a daily practice of a festival or a theatre program. In theatre any conceptional idea, any concept, is only worth max. 20% concerning the result, the rest is carrying stuff from here to there.

> Curating in the performing arts brings in a way of choreographic thinking. We rethink the strategies of curating in terms of composing space, objects and bodies, in opening paths and structures of participation and placement through movement.

Still, in combination with theory, exhibitions, films you can go a bit more in the direction of a topic-based festival…

SUTINEN: Perhaps the differences between the contemporary fine arts and the contemporary performing arts are much less than between old and contemporary art in general. Instead of concentrating on the differences, we were actively investigating the connections between, and the obvious in-betweens, which were of interest to the artists too. Naturally, the difference did not disappear but the meeting would create moments of lapses, which opened up the space in ways that were not concerned with differences in practice.

Gabriele Brandstetter, within your Master of Dance Studies at Freie Universität Berlin there is a segment that deals with curating. You bring your students together with future visual arts curators. How much common ground is there, where are the limitations?

BRANDSTETTER: We just have a small section where we deal with curating, so the idea was to bring the students together for a week with the students of curatorial studies in visual arts by Beatrice von Bismarck in Leipzig. We went to the Baumwollspinnerei, which is now an interesting area of very different galleries and production places. The visual arts students thought much more in terms of the political and the economical and especially in terms of the architectural. And the performing arts people thought much more in terms of movement and time and dramaturgy. And also in terms of audience – they wanted to open the whole space into the city, and they wanted to explore possibilities of participation: how to provide an interface of different time frames, between the history of an industrial place and the space, now, for contemporary art forms.
HURTZIG: Only people coming from theatre and performance arts are concerned with the role of the spectator, or at least have an interesting way of integrating the idea of the spectator already in the working process.

Hannah, you went through most of the job profiles we were talking about: You were a dramaturge, a program maker, now with your *Blackmarket* you do something that could be called curatorial art. How would you describe the differences and similarities?

HURTZIG: When I work as a dramaturge, I try to undo the dramaturge in the process. Basically following a rule of self-violation: it is more important *when* you say something than *what* you say. As a curator I try to minimise the role of the curator. For the *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge* we are researching one hundred experts to talk about a specific topic, but we don't make a list of the 100 most interesting people. We don't cast the experts concerning their performative qualities: someone has specific expertise which adds to the chosen topic, we meet him or her to discuss in detail their talk, but we don't care if he or she is a good or charming talker. We try to minimise the function of the curator as the one that decides, judges, has opinions.
TEUCHIES: But the way you are creating context is already a way of curating – you are creating a pattern in which things happen and frame it very clearly.
HURTZIG: This is of course true. I call it establishing a system, I also like the term by Irit Rogoff: opportunity, creating an opportunity. And we are trying to get rid of the authorship by franchising the project. People can buy a *Blackmarket* licence and do it by themselves.

The visibility and the influence of the curator is an important point: How much impact on the work do you have, how much freedom do you give, how much do you frame it? In visual arts imposing a topic on artists is quite common and many visual artists are open for that – for different reasons relating to the specific conditions of their work. But as a performing artist you would say: "Sorry, I have my projects planned for the next two years, maybe after that." The flexibility and speed and size and budget implications of the different media play important roles.

SUTINEN: Is it really so different?
TEUCHIES: I think it is. I was discussing it with Guy Gypens, director of Kaaitheater in Brussels who is making a programme on…
SUTINEN: … Climate change.
TEUCHIES: Which is an important subject. So how can artists and programmers deal with the subject of climate change? And is it okay to commission artists to make a piece on this subject? In the visual arts field many artists have been creating work related to this theme for ten, even twenty years!
SUTINEN: But in the visual arts this is initiated by the artists not by the curators.
BRANDSTETTER: So it is about decision-making, how much you set topics, how much you want to shape work? Perhaps this struggle, the limitations and the possibilities could be included as a visible part of programming.
HURTZIG: You mean that the curator makes himself and his methodology transparent?
BRANDSTETTER: Yes but not as a person, but within the system and the structure – even if the personal style is important.
TEUCHIES: The curator in visual arts has more freedom to be creative with what he wants to say with the exhibition than a programmer in the performing arts. Programming a venue or a festival is not the same at all as making an art exhibition. Although we can see a growing tendency in the performing art centres in Belgium to set up short intensive programming periods based on a certain theme or concept…They often include not only a presentation of finished theatre or dance performances but also works-in-progress, debates, conferences and even visual art exhibitions or hybrid presentations. So this becomes a bit more 'curating'…
SUTINEN: Another major difference is that the visual arts curators are often also interpreting what they are doing, for example in catalogues which are an important part of an exhibition. Providing context, a presentational frame, and analytical interpretation, is crucial for the identity for visual arts curators, but sometimes still feels as optional with performing arts curators.

Moderated by Florian Malzacher, Tea Tupajić & Petra Zanki

Providing context, a presentational frame, and analytical interpretation, is crucial for the identity for visual arts curators, but sometimes still feels as optional with performing arts curators.

Kings Head Pub,
London




FREE LIVE MUSIC

Looking Backwards

A personal travel through the former West and the landscapes of programming

Goran Sergej Pristaš

Translated from the Croatian by Una Bauer

AT THAT TIME I LEARNED SEVERAL IMPORTANT WORDS:

- co-production
- network
- dissemination
- programmer
- interculturalism
- information void
- cultural management.

They were all carried over with the hot winds of the 1980s when history, for a certain cultural context, was just about to start. For some other cultural contexts, history was approaching its zenith, just before the coming abyss of the 1990s. At that time the so-called 'independent scene' was flourishing in Zagreb. This independence should of course be understood conditionally, because the scene was deeply entwined with the Association of the Socialist Youth of Croatia, the organization that silently verified the activities of the young and created opportunities for their public funding through their cultural centres.

It is also a fact that the members of the Association, youth activists at that time, who are now in charge of most cultural structures in the City of Zagreb, still have trouble understanding the notion of independence in civil society.

The impetus for youth cultural production in the 1980s in Zagreb was most certainly provided by an event, treated locally in Olympic-size proportions – the international university sports event: the Universiade. Together with massive infrastructural investments, Zagreb gained an internationally relevant theatre festival – Eurokaz, whose importance was confirmed by the fact that it hosted the IETM already in 1990. At that time, IETM was also an internationally relevant theatre network. The acronym IETM stood for Informal European Theatre Meeting at that time, while today the network is called the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (the acronym remaining the same). For a dramaturgy

student and a theatre critic of an independent radio station with an inclination towards the cultural *novum* (Radio 101), that was a fascinating period: new theatre (Flemish, NSK, Wooster, Corsetti, Raffaelo Sanzio, Jesurun, La fura...), new institutions (Kaai, Mickery, TAT, Hebbel, Kampnagel, Felix Meritis), new dramaturgy (Claudia Castellucci, Marianne Van Kerkhoven, Eda Čufer, Norman Frisch)...

That period was filled with multiplicities in discursive production as well: new productions from the new institutions were gaining strength through international cooperation; however it needed new points of contextualization and a new glossary of terms in management and in policy. Performing arts theory was looking for new terms and was borrowing them from other theoretical discourses (philosophy, literary theory, visual arts criticism, musicology). That process culminated in the publication of a glossary of new dramaturgy in the journal Theaterschrift. However, their mutual questioning and symbiosis are important to this day. Management wrapped up in programming, programming wrapped up in dramaturgy, dramaturgy wrapped up in theory, theory wrapped up in performance, performance wrapped up in education, education wrapped up in dissemination, dissemination wrapped up in management...

It is important to note that the same period in the West was marked by two performance heroes: the programmer and the dramaturge. Both were formed in order to articulate the distinction from direction, either from art direction or from directing as art. In Zagreb, on the other hand (and in Yugoslavia as well), the key differentiation was in relation to political directing which provided a format for a new hybrid praxis of an artist that creates, produces, reflects, publishes, presents and distributes.

The same period in the West was marked by two performance heroes: the programmer and the dramaturge. Both were formed in order to articulate the distinction from direction, either from art direction or from directing as art.

Travel

In 1989, after finding out that the next IETM would take place in Zagreb, I bought an InterRail ticket and, together with a friend who had nothing to do with the theatre field, decided to travel around Europe and visit the new centres of theatre production.

Memories are hazy and unclear, but here is what I believe happened:

We were travelling during the night, and our day goal was to visit the key places and meet the key people, possibly also to collect some material for the radio and to get ourselves ready to cover the IETM.

The official means of communication at that time was the fax machine which didn't guarantee regular delivery of documents, and international phone calls were extremely expensive.

Our first two destinations – Wiener Festwochen, or rather their programmes Big Motion and Theater am Turm in Frankfurt – ended up a flop; we couldn't talk to anyone from the direction because they were away, and we waited unsuccessfully for three hours for Tom Stromberg to see us. It should be said that the Vienna festival, together with BITEF, was immensely important for the education of Croatian and Slovenian artists. While Eurokaz at that time managed to bring over the not overly expensive productions of Rosas, Fabre, Needcompany, Jesurun, Castellucci, we were still travelling to Vienna to see Wooster Group, Lepage, Sellars, Abdoh etc. In order to see Wilson, people travelled to Germany, and the stories about travelling through socialist countries and then crossing the border on foot to Berlin in order to save some money are mythical today.

We had no desire to stay at TAT for a long time because the spirit of the office reminded us of the German-Austro-Hungarian offices that we were all too familiar with from our local theatres.

At Kampnagel, we were personally welcomed by Hannah Hurtzig, art director of the centre at the time. She showed us around during a two-hour conversation. We were completely swept away by the factory space turned into a cultural centre. On our way out of socialism, we still couldn't quite get the hang of the fact that the industrial age was soon to end up in the suburbs and open up possibilities for that kind of space transformation in Croatia too. From today's perspective, it is clear that this transformation was practically impossible because of the wild domination of private capital that changed laws to suit its interests. The locations of former Zagreb factories turned out to be immensely profitable.

The shapes of the 1980s difference were visible already at Kampnagel: a female team, programming of problems, cool fun and politics as disagreement.

Speculation

A few years ago, while we were having lunch in Graz, Hannah Hurtzig asked: "Why is everybody so focused on education all of a sudden? Why do we all care about it so much now?"

The question, of course, was directed at the art scene and the cultural institutions.

One possible answer was that we are confronted with the possible "concrete appropriation and re-articulation of the knowledge/power unity that has congealed within the administrative modern machine of the state" (Paolo Virno: *A Grammar of the Multitude*), a situation characterized by the growing "general intellect" in the public sphere. However, it is important to understand the dislocation of educational structures from the existing institutional framework of the academies and universities into the non-institutional formats of immediate production and knowledge exchange and the re-appropriation of knowledge products from the recently marginal institutional sphere (big exhibitions, dance centres, networks etc.).

The 1990s brought a large and unrepresented area to the cultural market of Western Europe – Eastern Europe. The real influence of the breakthrough of this new space (but also of art and knowledge) on the transformation of the artistic market and the institutions of the West still hasn't been completely articulated. A number of Western institutions and festivals joined networks for the production and presentation of Eastern European art. That was helped by all these countries joining the EU. Suspicious of Eastern European art dealers, they found partners among the old institutional theatres and co-produced a number of younger authors who were more than willing to present the Eastern Europe in Kusturica's images of weddings, drinking, sentiments and Slavic spirit even there where there were no Slavs involved. The only thing that those collaborations left behind was the renewed strength of the old theatre structures or renegade institutional producers who produced these new stars through their private agencies.

While the art of so-called New Europe self-identified with the imagery of Eastern Europe, the art institutions of the West formed the basis for the new politiza-tion of artists' real production and their participation in the market.

While the art of so-called New Europe, longing to be presented, self-identified with the imagery of Eastern Europe, the art institutions of the West formed the basis for the new politization of artists' real production and

their participation in the market. Let us understand here the politization of the work as a momentum of thought that became the primary source of the production of (artistic) goods.

That artistic "subsumption into the sphere of labour of what had hitherto belonged to political action" (Virno) or the politization of the art work was the most obvious in dance, electronic music and visual culture – artistic fields that in the 1990s were on the margins of Western representationism.

Art institutions of the West quickly reoriented themselves towards the nominal integration of new artistic powers and, unconsciously replicating post-Fordist principles of production, invited artists over for an intervention in, and production of, new collaborations. The position of the artistic director and the programming director of the institution, who was redistributing the artistic work, functions and activities within the existing resources, was transformed through the appropriation of the artistic knowledge. The new function, *curator* in English (already well known in the context of visual arts), came out of the redefinition of the programmers' relationship towards the presence of other people (by other people I mean: artists, audiences, communities) and this strategy of collaboration gained a new quality – invention.

So, while the new Eastern European sector was exhausting its imagination imitating Western institutional models from the 1980s (cultural centres, low budget co-production structures, specialized centres, museums of contemporary art), new models of collaboration were flourishing within Western institutions. Communication values, participation in the language and the production of knowledge (artistic research) didn't gain financial recognition as well; the underdeveloped economy of new artistic and collaborative practices remains poor in comparison with the well-serviced economies of artistic production in conventional production schemes. Therefore, even though institutions are capable of co-opting even the most progressive formats of political thinking, they never reflect the changes in their own logical whole because they are not open to the scope of the institutional field; they buy per piece and don't participate in the space of the articulation of change, *in the public sphere that is not led by the state*. The role of those cultural institutions that are appropriating research and production guided by intellectual outreach, repeats the pattern left over from the Enlightenment – it reproduces the idea of the aesthetic state hiding the "depth and sophistication of the politics of subjectivation that is enshrined within this evolving program of aesthetic education." (Brian Holmes: *Games, Corporations & Distant Constellations*).

But the real meeting of the art of East and West, North and South, big and small or the included and the *incommunicados* happens *in the public sphere that is not led by the state*, in the series of events, collaborations and new economies that were often developed in collaboration with the institutions, but that have grown out of the newly produced situations and not out of the formats of presentation. These situations have grown out of parasitic economies of exchange between artists, parallel inscriptions in history, *peer-to-peer* economies and knowledge exchange, tactical networking and the institutionalization of the local but also non-identitarian praxis. The new platforms and forums of the disparate combination of individual artists and curators, projects, institutions, independent organizations, economic structures, fractions of networks, parts of the civil, private and public sector, were all based on heterogeneous interests,

investments and practices. Viewed in totality, they combine possible multiplicity, producing a new situation of togetherness.

Continuing our travels

Staying with a colleague in Hamburg on Reeperbahn Strasse; yet another day in Kampnagel where we already felt comfortable (I met Hannah Hurtzig in Zagreb at the IETM meeting afterwards and at that time she already knew that she needed to leave Kampnagel. Afer she left, Kampnagel probably abandoned its buildings and left them to the regional cultural centre, and that is how it still is today).

The next stop was The Mickery. Unfortunately, it was already clear that this was its final year. The Mickery wasn't a new institution, but it remained the phantom of the new.

Ritsaert ten Cate with a bottle of Jenever and a bunch of video tapes that we watched until early morning – the short history of the avant-garde theatre in 20 VHS tapes. Enough to realize how important it is to have an office. In fact, enough to take having an office way too seriously during the next 20 self-managing years.

Kaaitheater. This was supposed to be the icing on the cake – the desire of every ambitious young dramaturge. Unfortunately, the assistant told us that Hugo De Greef and Marianne Van Kerkhoven had just passed by us on their way out. She couldn't believe we didn't recognize them (?!?). With the coming years, I realized that my repeated process of introducing myself or being introduced to the Flemish was a potential hobby: Jan Fabre – seven times; Marianne Van Kerkhoven four; Hugo de Greef three; Jan Lauwers three... I expect I will be introduced to some of them at least a couple of more times.

Leaving for Amsterdam on the final train, arriving at a late hour, wandering around Amsterdam with luggage, being awake in the Hilton lobby with a cup of coffee, going to the Netherlands Theatre Institute, met no one, barely saw anything, went back.

Speculation 2

This spring in Graz, Hannah asked another interesting question: "When did we start using the notion of *curator* in the performing arts?"

It is interesting that the use of that notion coincides with the functional disciplining of the position of the dramaturge in the framework of an open type of institution. In the last two decades, a number of places where one could study dramaturgy were opened.

At the same time, paradoxically, the number of working dramaturges in theatres was reduced and dramaturges aren't employed by the drama theatre any longer, neither within the programming department, nor for the practical aspects of dealing with the text. Yet the number of dramaturges who are active in the non-institutional production and various non-disciplinary jobs in programming of the institutions of the open type has risen. Dramaturges have taken over some more responsibility for the various side activities, together with editorial work and collaboration with chosen artists, such as research, studio work, laboratoriums, discussions, and symposiums... The curatorial function paradoxically grows out of the new

cycle of attempting to discipline the dramaturgical function towards a structuring of the program of various forms and formats. It also develops as a liberating functionalization of the directing authority of the artistic manager, programmer, or the artistic director, turning all of these roles into a figure that positions itself not only within the institution but also in opposition with the institution, defining its relationship with the institution as a certain temporality. As a result, the institution is represented as a fluid space, and the curator subjectifies herself/himself through differentiation. So it is not surprising that curators are defining themselves more and more, thanks to the experiences they have in cultural management, either in an organization or through formal dramaturgical education, while the dramaturge as a function disappears from the management scene.

I personally believe that this position does not follow from the redefinition of the position of the networked programmer in the 1980s which was primarily developmental. The curatorial function is mainly interventionist although it is often presented as creative and mediatory. While the function of a programmer was to service an institution, the curatorial function is communicatory, questioning the institutional frameworks, but also servicing the public. The focus of the curator has less to do with the relationship with the organisation, than with communication and interpretation. So it is symptomatic, however superficial, that criticism of curatorial politics is directed against the complexity of the program and illustrational programming segments (performances, lectures, projections, labs…) which resulted in the proliferation of performances based on one idea and the dictum of comprehensibility. In that sense, the curatorial position simulates the position of the curator in visual culture, but the key difference is the economy of these two fields. The curator in the field of performance rarely operates with large budgets, media visibility and private capital, which is the case in visual arts. Performing arts have a completely different dynamic of production and working conditions in comparison with the field of visual culture. That means that the literal translation of curatorial policies in the field of performing arts often results in the reduction of production budgets. The proof of that is the reduction of co-productions, the investment in the less known or emerging artists and the multiple presentations of the work of the artist that are not coming out of the production centres (Berlin, Bruxelles, Paris in the metaphorical sense etc.)

While the function of a programmer was to service an institution, the curatorial function is communicatory, questioning the institutional frameworks, but also servicing the public.

AND THE GLOSSARY HAS CHANGED TOO:

- collaboration
- platform
- change of perspective
- curator
- visibility, integration, understanding
- knowledge production
- interdisciplinary practice.

Outdoor Stage,
Čakovec, Croatia




ČAKOVEC - GRAD ZRINSKIH

Shuffling the Deck, Shifting Positions

Curating as environ-mentalism

Elke Van Campenhout

To find a frame, a timing or a situation within which suggestions of others can be realized.
Thomas Plischke

1.

In this text I would like to focus on a particular form of curatorship: a practice that grew out of (and in opposition to) the 'new' style of programming of the 1980s institutions. An attitude in thinking about curating in which the role of the programmer and the role of the artist start to intertwine. I'd like to talk about a curatorship that tries to redefine the boundaries put up by the institutions that were built for the production modes and logic of a generation of autonomous artists, a rethinking of the role of the institution by introducing the notions of vulnerability, risk and imperfection into the programming idiom, and a translation of the 'relational esthetics' of the visual arts towards a more ecological phrasing of the time and space shared by the performers, 'spect-actors', public members and the resisting (art)objects they encounter.

An important experience for me in my role of spectator, and a starting point for this ramble through the focus points of my memory, was the 10-day performance event BDC/Thomas Plischke and Friends organized in 2001 in the temporary site of the Beursschouwburg in Brussels (which was at that point being renovated): the BSBbis. Talking to then dance programmer Carine Meulders, it became clear to me that this project already introduced a lot of elements that in the next 10 years would become important tools in rethinking the performing arts notions of curatorship and the role of the artist/curator, as well as for the re-creation of the institution by introducing derogatory practices within its territory (another use of space, time, and the distinction between performers and audience members), and another way of thinking the social body of participants of the environment created by (but not limited to) the programmed events.

Basically BDC/Thomas Plischke & Friends started out as an idea to show two of the BDC performances (Affects and (Re)SORT), while at the same time creating a completely new environment of parallel performances, workshops, discourse sessions, concerts, films and informal encounters. Collaborators to these projects were artists such as Mårten Spångberg, Hygiene Heute, Alice Chauchat, Davis Freeman, Lilia Mestre. There was a theoretical programme with workshops organized by Jeroen Peeters and Steven De Belder with contributions from Gerald Siegmund, Jan Ritsema, Stefanie Wenner, Kattrin Deufert etc. The project ran for 10 days, 24 hours a day, and invited both artists and audience members to share the space not only for the performances and workshops, but also to spend the time in-between together, even spending the night at the venue, maximalizing the potential of the unexpected, of the informal encounter, of experiencing the changing atmosphere of the space-at-work/at-leisure.

An important factor in this project was the fact that it was set up initially without a definite space in mind: the regular Beursschouwburg was under reconstruction at the time, and the theatre had not yet found another location, nor was it clear if another theatre space was exactly what the artistic team needed at that point. In that sense, the project that was being developed also to an important degree changed the thinking about the institution-in-transition, and the project location BSBbis (in a relatively eerie part of Brussels) also became the temporary location for the adventurous working of the Beursschouwburg in the years before their move back to the renovated theatre in the centre. Two timings in this sense were developing simultaneously: the creation of the project, and the search for a location. Both logics became intertwined on the crossroads of the need for mobility and flexibility of the programme and its realization.

What was important in the realization of this project was the coming together of different social bodies: the first 24-hour group of 60 artists, opening up to a wider group of participants for the workshops and discourse sessions and then to the 'regular' public around performance time. What was interesting in the thinking about the role of the curator in this case was the fact that Thomas Plischke himself spent most of the 'public' moments together with Kattrin Deufert in a reenactment of Andy Warhol's *Sleep* in a bed in the café, preferring the nightly hours for experiencing the 'other' space of the BSBbis, another kind of performativity visible only to the night watcher or another sleepless soul. The traditional 'visibility' of the curator (as we know it from the classical view on curatorship in the visual arts, where the curation, in itself an artistic gesture, is signed and recognized) was broken up by the curator giving up his central function, only shaping the timing and the situation of the event, but not the content frame that had to be filled. In other words: the curation was not so much about creating an agenda for discussion but in negotiating the format of the agenda in the first place.

What these 10 days also produced was the rethinking of the value of the moment through blurring the boundaries between 'performance' and 'daily life', between social rituals and performative work, between production time and performance time.

As Thomas Plischke himself said (in an interview with Rudi Laermans, Carine Meulders and Kattrin Deufert): "I think that every collaboration has its time and that you learn throughout the collaboration to discover its mechanics." Although he was talking about BDC in this quote and not specifically about the BDC-event, this is an important reference point in understanding the mechanics of the kind of curatorship that would be developed more intensely in the years to come. The curatorship being not only about bringing together works of art, creating different resonances and echoes, rethinking one work through the other, thinking about differences and repetitions, but also about creating openings and weaknesses in the curating, allowing for vulnerability and 'empty moments' to be fully part of the experience. The importance of this stance on curatorship is that it takes a clear distance from the power and control strategies of the regular performing arts field, allowing risk

In other words: the curation was not so much about creating an agenda for discussion but in negotiating the format of the agenda in the first place.

to enter into the project set-up, and putting into question not only the authorship of the artist/curator, but also the market value of the artistic product.

Thomas Plischke again: "The utopia probably doesn't consist of creating a temporary community or *communitas*. Rather it shows that if we gather for a performance, every momentary created element is part of the social or communicative system that we set up together. If you look at it from the point of view of Luhmann's system theory you know that there are only these momentary elements and not also something like an overall system. The possibility of failure, vulnerability, is there when you no longer know when you will lose your ground. That is what is important to me: to introduce the conviction that the system for which the public pays and that in fact is created by the performers and the public together, at the same time is not there at all."

The BSB bis event had a follow-up in the arts centre Vooruit in Ghent in 2002, invited by Barbara Raes: b-visible, a 72-hour event, curated by Thomas Plischke, Kattrin Deufert and Jeroen Peeters. This time the project had the theoretical content-focus of queerness and visibility and inspired a different kind of working and curating within the institution: the 'intensification' of performance events, transdisciplinary programming and parcours work, folding open the building and showing it in different states of living and working became one of the driving forces of the artistic programming team of Vooruit in the years to come.

2. Curating as institutional prosthesis and critique

To understand this kind of curating and even the 'institutionalization' of these forms of curatorship, we have to take a look at the scene as it was at that point. The 1980s had produced arts centres and later on subsidized work spaces for artistic production and research, with a new surge of artists entering the scene, with the need for rethinking the disciplinary boundaries, and the cry for a more 'holistic' way of thinking about arts practice and discourse development, these institutions proved not always to be the ideal spaces for rethinking production parameters and disciplinary boundaries. A lot of these spaces by the beginning of the new millennium had found their specific ways of cyclic programming, working with yearly program books and subscriptions. For the new generations of artists that no longer (wanted to) fit the institutional agendas, it was important to find new formats of working. On the other hand, another generation of programmers also wanted to find a way of breaking open the institutional formatting to once again free the space for the artists. It is in that middle field, in this open space, that the programmer and the artist/curator found each other: in the want of the programmer to challenge the ways of the system, and in the need of the artist to escape the programming logic of the subsidiary system (first you get a residency in a workspace, then you get (not) picked up by one of the bigger arts centres, etc...). The need to break out of this production logic produced a kind of solidarity movement within the artist community which translated itself into different artist initiatives that in their own ways tried to break open the logic of the performing arts market. An example of this is Praticable, an initiative created in 2005 by Alice Chauchat, Frédéric de Carlo, Frédéric Gies, Isabelle Schad and Odile Seitz, as an answer to the programmer's demands. The 'open collective' shares nothing but body practices, out of which each member can create his/her own work, in collaboration or not with other Praticable members. But the interesting part is that whenever one of them is programmed, they program one of their colleagues as a 20-minute opening programme to their own show. The curatorial aspect here has nothing to do with content, nor with a specific kind of aesthetics, but everything with reclaiming the fundaments of the production mechanisms of the performance scene.

In Belgium, these curatorial initiatives rarely thrive outside of the institutional framework. More often than not we could speak about a curatorial redistribution of the

> The radical change in the position of the spectator is one of attitude, precisely that he leaves behind his position and starts looking for a connection, that he inscribes himself in the bigger story.

institutional: the artist/curator claims his/her position within one (or more) arts house(s), and then re-distributes the means their position produces with a larger number of networked artists and thinkers. It is a way of working that is sustained by for example a workspace like nadine in Brussels, which 'lends' its house and (part of its) budget for six months to an artist/curator that will in these months open up their working to other artists, opening up for public moments every now and then and to varying groups of interested, participating or involved 'spect-actors'.

Talking to artists these last years, the remark that always comes back is that they want to 'escape' the institutional logic that renders them passive, that makes them wait in line to be 'picked up', be 'chosen', to go through all the predescribed steps to become a recognized artist. Not only do a lot of them no longer aspire to this notion of 'the artist', since they are involved in rewriting the rules for artistic authorship in complex ways of collaborative and/or communal practice that defy the programming system, but they also want to get rid of the frustrating passivity they find themselves in when confronted with the ways of the subsidiary system. Especially since this system seems to be crumbling down a bit more every year.

In that sense the curatorial position regains its good old etymology of hospitality, of 'taking care' of the networked community. But on the other hand it also creates a new paradigm for the re-distributer, the artist/curator who is at the same time claiming his vulnerability by offering an empty frame for working by sending out an (open) invitation to the scene, and defending his position as the creator of this frame as an art work in itself. It would bring us too far to analyze all the different possible models of re-distribution here, or to define the criteria for 'good' or 'bad' positioning between the institution and the independent field. But it is certain that in every one of these projects the boundaries are put into question again, in the best cases producing a sense of renewal within the institution, as well as in the artistic and curatorial practices of all the participants.

3.

What we see happening in the performance scene is thus a transition from curating the artists, over curating the art works (as it happened in the two Klapstuk festivals for contemporary dance, curated by Jerôme Bel in 2003 and 2005, and claimed by him as his 'art work' in a newspaper interview) to the curation of a space, of a social body, shared by artists, audience members, and 'art objects'. It is a space that demands time and attention for a sense of belonging (be it critical or engaged, active or passive) to grow, that bridges the all-too-easily claimed positions of the artist, programmer, spectator or critic. An extraordinary example of this kind of curating was achieved by André Lepecki in his two In-Transit festivals in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. Although in this case his curatorship had a clear discourse stamp – coloured by (neo)post-colonial performance themes, and in that sense certainly was more than an empty box for gathering and exchange – his transformation of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, with its heavy institutional frame, into an open house for discussion (opening up out of the Lab sessions – the first year assisted by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning, the second year self-organized – interacting through public discussions, entering into the fabric of the bar discussions) was a beautiful example of how even within the institution the rules can be bent in such a way as to produce a subtly different common ground to work on. Artists and theoreticians, lab students and critics sharing the same space for a prolonged period of time, for discussions, concerts, parties, eating in the garden, and working, broke the frame of the 'festival' as consumerist high-point of the cultural year, and produced a working space that didn't fall into the trap of easily created critical oppositions. Instead what appeared was a generous atmosphere for engaged thinking and working, always bumping into the prickly theme of the festival's programming: the resistance of the object.

In-Transit was an example of an 'environmentalist' approach to curation, a careful ecological balancing exercise

between given elements, the creation of a frame for the formation of a social body in constant transformation, and the channels for the inspiration and flow of knowledge to find its way to the different sub-groups of interests participating in the festival.

What prevented this festival from getting trapped in the festivalitis context (unlike, for example, the Trance festival organized by HAU a couple of years ago) was its attitude, its openness instituted by the curatorial organization of space and time, by the distribution of proximity and accessibility of the different participants groups, by the care for the food, the library, the focuses of attention. In that way the difference between working and watching, between practicing theory and performance, between participants and audience members was minimalized, without giving up on the challenge, the invitation for positioning yourself within the given parameters. Here, as in the BDC example, the space for the arts was stretched out into the surrounding park, the cafeteria, the hallways and the metro back to the hotel.

4.

In short, in this text I speak about a very specific understanding of curatorship: a shared curatorship, putting into question the authorial roles and introducing new potentials for exchange and sharing of (artistic) material, a curatorship that extends the invitation to rethink the ecology of the performing arts system from within, without introducing definite new ideological standpoints or stubborn critical certainties. A curatorship not so much as a statement but as a redistribution of power that makes us rethink the fabric of our social bodies and belonging. A curating of the now, in the moment of its unfolding.

I like the definition Nigel Thrift gives for the rethinking of a political attitude in his *Non-representational theory*: "a potentiality that is brought into being only as it acts or exists in the interstices of interaction".

If this is so, the whole idea of curating is no longer based on fixed points in space, performances in venues. The real curating is the non-curated part of the interstices, of the places in-between, of the potential of the situation for changing one's attitude, one's mind or one's sense of belonging. The curatorial practice in that sense opens up cracks in the system in the space, where things can happen that were neither programmed nor foreseeable. Encounters between people, between people and objects, architecture, history, thoughts and ideas roaming the space that can be picked up by anyone, rephrased and relaunched in another conversation, left as a trace for someone else to pick up, etcetera. Environmentalism is about allowing for that to happen.

In a space like that, the role of the curator and the artist becomes interchangeable, as does the role of the spectator. Since the curatorial attitude is one of creating a space in which anyone could feel empowered to start creating or changing it by their input, the spectator is confronted with a serious challenge here, albeit possibly in the guise of a somewhat obscure invitation. It is an invitation that allows them to become affected by the circumstances, to actively open up to this potential change, not necessarily by actively getting out there, but by opening up their perspectives on what might happen. It is this oscillating promise that creates the space and the social body within it. This kind of unspoken promise that something is going on, connecting all elements within the given parameters, rendering palpable the intuition that any kind of change happening within it also creates a change in the whole of the constellation.

The radical change in the position of the spectator is one of attitude, precisely that he leaves behind his position and starts looking for a connection, that he inscribes himself in the bigger story that is being written, not so much *for* him, but *with* him. Although this might sound a bit like an ideal situation, with the right set-up of time and space, allowing for gaps and interstices, and (very importantly) including the whole organizational team in adapting and communicating this attitude, it has proven itself to be possible.

> A curatorship not as a statement but as a redistribution of power that makes us rething the fabric of our social bodies and belongings. A curating of the now, in the moment of its unfolding.

At that point curatorial politics are no longer about superficially provoking an (un)wanted interactive dynamic between spectators and performers, but about allowing them to rethink their role in the whole. Whatever is being said or done in that space is no longer an abstract message sent out to an abstract receiver, but becomes a piece of constantly changing information, that passes through every individual present in a personal, although non-autobiographical, way. It is for him to pick it up or leave it stranding, to make a choice or give over to the flow, to be critical, enthusiastic, a glitch in the circulation, or a conductor or the environmental energy. But he will know that whatever position he chooses to take on will in some way change the outlook of the constellation.

"Diaghilev is the most important curator of the 20th century"

An Interview with exhibition maker **Hans Ulrich Obrist**

The concept of the curator is becoming more and more influential within the performing arts. You were one of the people that made this term popular in visual arts – but your work as curator is not restricted to that.

My big curatorial inspiration has always been Sergei Diaghilev, the Russian impresario of the Ballets Russes. I think he is the most important curator of the 20th century. He brought together art, choreography, music… Stravinsky, Picasso, Braque, Natalia Goncharova… the greatest artists, composers, dancers and choreographers of his time. That is the idea of completely trans-disciplinary curating, which I arrived at out of a contemporary necessity – but was also historically inspired.

When I started to curate visual arts in the early nineties, it was out of friendship and conversations with artists that I felt it was also time to expand the notion of curating itself. This process finally led me to the curating of architecture, curating of sound, curating of literature – and last but not least also to the curating of time in the context of theatre and opera. Art can travel in different ways. It can travel through objects – it can travel over centuries. It can also travel through scores, like music. And since during the nineties many artists were working with the notion of time, Philippe Parreno and I wanted to bring them together to a time based group show. That was what happened with "Il Tempo del Postino" in 2007.

How did you approach this idea of time-based curating in "Il Tempo del Postino"?

It was an unrealised project for a long time, because we couldn't find a space or institution to do it. It could have happened in lots of different contexts – but we couldn't find an opera that would produce it, we couldn't find a theatre, we couldn't find a museum. It seems that there are institutions missing for such grand interdisciplinary endeavours. Then the Manchester International Festival was founded, and the director Alex Poots invited me to realise our unrealised project.

Out of conversations with artists from different contexts but mostly out of our own generation like Liam Gillick, Tino Seghal, Tacita Dean, Carsten Höller, Olafur Eliasson, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and others we developed a score for the evening. The idea was that it could be replayed – and later it actually was.

It was a very polyphonic situation. Olafur Eliasson said: "There is so much going on here!" And indeed I think the potential might not have been where we expected it, in the sense that there was a group of artists that put together a sequence of situations under our guidance – it was more a question of what happened without being planned.

You talk about a score and another exhibition of yours was called "The rule of the game" – would you say performing arts are less easy to control? You can set up as many rules as you want – they might not be obeyed.

The question of control of course is interesting – you need to keep the show together, but you also need to question your own control. Otherwise it becomes a dead situation. In order to make an exhibition organic, you need to find the right mix between determinacy and in-determinacy. The right mix between an exhibition that is curated and organised and self-curated and self-organised so that the artworks and the show can emerge. The French use the word *commissaire*, which really is the curator as a policeman – I have always questioned that concept: I rather think it is important to think how we can inject self-organisation. Rules are also there to be shifted and changed.

It seems that the interest of the visual in performing arts is growing: Trisha Brown was presented at the last Documenta, Meg Stuart and Tim Etchells at the Manifesta two years ago…

… an even earlier beginning was Tom Stromberg programming "Theaterskizzen" at Catherine David's Documenta X. That was incredibly interesting at that time and inspiring also to me as well as the projects Hortensia Völckers curated in Vienna and Hamburg preceding this.

But did it start something? Did something grow out of these encounters?

Things are not linear, they are not picked up the next day. But they sink in. With exhibitions you always can only plant seeds. With "Tempo del Postino" we planted such a seed. Maybe in five or ten years there will be a young artist that has been triggered by that. These projects might have an immediate effect but they also have a long-term effect. We can clearly observe an increased interest, a desire of artists for unmediated experiences and direct performance. By this I mean where the viewer does not receive the exhibition in a prescriptive, dogmatic way, through the voice of the curator or of the artists, but truly experiences the art in all its complexity.

How do such unmediated art forms change the job of the curator? Can they be curated at all?

There are a lot of possibilities to curate it. We found one possible rule of the game with "Tempo del Postino". There is a huge potential. We will see in the next couple of years a lot of interesting approaches… To give you another example: We invited Marina Abramović to curate a group show about endurance in performance. She worked with a group of younger artists and the whole Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester was emptied completely for several weeks. The performance took over the entire institution.

When you talk about seeds: your project "Laboratorium" (together with Barbara Vanderlinden) had a very big influence on contemporary dance. Labs and research projects have very much influenced the last ten years in advanced performing arts institutions. Meanwhile laboratories and research almost seems to have replaced the fetish of the product.

It is interesting you would mention "Laboratorium" because it was the first time I connected with the world of dance – there was Xavier Le Roy and there was Meg Stuart. The show took place all over the city of Antwerp as a trans-disciplinary project in which one could explore very different

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laboratories of scientists and the very different studios of artists: The limits and possibilities of the places where art and science are produced. Throughout the city we had active labs where experiments were taking place. It was a very dispersed situation... There were the language laboratories and the laboratory of doubt by Carsten Höller. The most influential on dance and theatre was perhaps the "Theatre of Proof" by Bruno Latour. He started from the idea that it is very difficult to differentiate between what happens in the laboratory and what happens outside in nature and society – in some way we all work in laboratories: If we don't experiment ourselves then we are used by others for their experiments: climate change, food change, contagious diseases, urbanism, psychology and demography – everywhere scientists, engineers, statisticians who assemble data and put out their hypothesises, establish theories. So Latour curated a whole series of public demonstrations. For example, he restaged Pasteur's famous experiment... And that leads to Xavier Le Roy as a choreographer who studied molecular biology and presented in *Product of Circumstances* the body as a matter of social and cultural structures and as a practice of absolute necessity. The autobiographic exposé became the project. And Meg Stuart's *Highway* functioned as a choreography laboratory...

It was a cohabitation of art forms. And it led to other projects: for example, a couple of years later we invited Jérôme Bel to the Lyon Biennale. For him it was the first time he worked in an exhibition. For me the medium of the exhibition is where it all can come together, where we can produce reality together. The visual art world is a very good place right now, where all the disciplines can meet.

But you would call all these different projects for different disciplines still exhibitions?

Yes, yes – I am an exhibition maker and the exhibition is my medium. We expanded the field of the exhibition: I do exhibitions in a museum, but I also go beyond the boundaries of the museum space. There are dematerialised exhibitions; there are exhibitions that come to the home of the spectator like with the "Museum in progress" which happened in a daily newspaper. There are all kinds of possibilities, time-based, space-based, dematerialised...

I am at home in the visual art world and I am very happy there because within this world I can bring together all these things. If I want to understand what the effective forces in art are, I need to understand also what is happening in dance, in music, in literature. For me this is not a matter of theory, it is a practice. I don't think about these things theoretically, I just observe what is productive. My work has to be useful. It is totally pragmatic. But I realized: If I bring together people from different disciplines, it helps everybody. It motivates people. It produces unexpected results.

In performing arts there seems to be some scepticism by artists towards the term and changing function of the curator: That there is too much space taken, that the role of the curator becomes too important, that there is too much framework...

My notion of curating always was not to stand in the way. I believe the curator is a catalyst that has to be able to disappear. Alighiero Boetti told me when I was just beginning to work as a curator not to squeeze art into my predetermined scheme, but to start to look around and see what projects artists have and try to make them happen, to produce them as realities.

I do nothing, which is not in absolute agreement with the artist, and I would never impose a theme or a frame that does not come from the artists themselves. The rule of the game has to come from the artists. I don't believe in an authoritarian curator. I believe in the curator as an accomplice. So I have never had that problem that artists feel that I am somehow invasive or intrusive. Artists don't like it if their work is exploited. They don't like it when a curator uses their work to illustrate a thesis. And these are usually not interesting exhibitions anyway. If you have a theory and want to illustrate it, better write a book.

Would you be interested to not only bring performing artists into the world of visual art but also to curate within their frames?

There have been some first encounters – last year, for example, Georges Delnon, the director of the theatre in Basel, where we restaged "Tempo del Postino" in 2009 in coproduction with Art Basel and the Beyerler Foundation, invited me to curate something new. And while thinking about it, we realized that one thing we have in the art world and which is not so common in the world of performing arts is the way books are part of our work. In the art world we are obsessed with books. Everything we do includes publishing a book. Whereas I am often astonished that in performing arts you have great artists, but there has barely been a book published on their work. There is a huge discrepancy in terms of literature. So we came up with the idea to curate a book, an artist book and Georges suggested the book could also be the theatre program. So we invited Hans-Peter Feldmann, the legendary artist. For me that was a first modest step of what could happen in this context.

You also developed the idea of an interview marathon for Theater der Welt in 2005...

... where I was invited by the late Marie Zimmermann and the theatre curator Christine Peters. When they asked me to do something, after thinking about it for quite a long time, I proposed to put my interview project on stage as a durational presentation. This is the work where I engage most in a live presence – since most of the time the curator disappears and isn't on stage. So we programmed a 24-hour-marathon. And since then I have done these marathons all over the world and also developed different ones, many happened at the Serpentine Gallery: There was an interview marathon, an experiment marathon, a manifesto marathon, a poetry marathon and this year there will be a maps marathon. All these marathons have happened since then in the art world – but I would never have invented them if I had not been invited by a theatre festival.

Whenever we get out of our routine, we can invent things. So I hope that when I invite practitioners from other fields into the art world that something similar happens.

For example, when I first invited architects into the art world, they just showed their maquettes – that's what they always do, they send their maquettes. But when they came to see the exhibition, they realized that this was a bit weird, because all the artists were exposing experiences. So suddenly the architects started to do something totally different as well.

For me to invent a marathon in the theatre world and then bring it back to the art world helped me a lot in remapping my practise. These other fields are contact zones. That's why I think it is so important to have this trans-disciplinary way of working. That is a way we can all learn from each other.

So are you planning any other projects in the field of performing arts at the moment?

I live in a kind of a post-planning condition. I grew up as a kid in Switzerland reading a lot of Robert Walser, going on a lot of walks. And for me life is a kind of walk – with a lot of chance encounters. It is very important to be open. So I see my practise really as a *flânerie*, mostly through the city, but lately also sometimes through the countryside. As part of this *flânerie* a lot of things are possible, but it is difficult to predict. As Douglas Gordon would say: It has only just begun.

Interview by Florian Malzacher, Tea Tupajić & Petra Zanki

Ryogoku Kokugikan,
Tokyo




総合案内所
東京本場所
跳ね甚句
隅田川に響く、今日の土俵の名残りの甚句
相撲甚句 ミニライブ

Relations in Motion

The curatorial condition in visual art – and its possibilities for the neighbouring disciplines

Beatrice von Bismarck

Translated from the German by Marina MIladinov

The curatorial domain has in the past few years evolved into an extremely popular and therefore all the more fiercely debated cultural field of activity. Originally, the adjective derived from the term "curator", which very generally denoted a manager, and specifically, in the field of art, one who cared for the museum collections. According to its etymological meaning, which goes back to the Latin verb "curare" = "to care for", the curator was responsible for collecting, arranging, protecting, and presenting the objects that were preserved at an art institution. The professional profile began evolving in the late 18th century, with the development of museums and galleries, and it crystallized after 1945, as a result of the rapidly increasing number of collecting and exhibiting art institutions, as well as the great expansion of the art market. This professionalization and differentiation in the field of art allowed the term "curator" to become a semantically and hierarchically structured word for a profession.

In the late 20th and early 21st century, the increased global mobility of people, information, and objects, the greater significance of culture for the economic development of regions, and a larger social demand for creative potentials extended to a variety of fields and caused a further increase of place value. The consequence was, on the one hand, a celebrity cult growing around the figure of the "curator", which degraded artists and art critics to a lower position in the field of art. Hand in hand with that development, manifold relocations into the curatorial field from various artistic and scholarly disciplines and professions were continually bringing the status of curators, including their tasks and methods, into the focus of debate. For whereas on the one hand curators were enthusiastically granted an

exceptionally "artist-like" status, considered as progress within the evolution of the field, on the other hand it was precisely this similarity with the artists' role that triggered some of the fiercest criticisms and animosities. Shifts in perspective and accent, be it towards the definition of the work accomplished, or towards the procedures used in organizing an audience, or perhaps towards the attitude to consumerist behaviour, could easily turn praise for the exceptional position of the curator into condemnation of that very position as presumptuous and inappropriate. It is not only the social privileges that are at stake here, but quite fundamentally the way and efficiency of partaking in the processes of the creation of meaning. It is also to this relation, eventually, that curators owe the fact that the demand of competences for curatorial practices has evidently become more complex. An independent form of cultural production and communication of meaning has been established – primarily in the field of fine arts, but increasingly also in the neighbouring disciplines, such as dance, theatre, film, literature, music, and eventually also the natural sciences. The combination and interrelation of objects, information, people, and spaces have shown themselves not only as the constitutive tasks in conceiving, setting up, and presenting the exhibitions, but also as key competences in social, political, and economic relations marked by globalization and post-Fordism.

In its history and status, the curatorial field has been closely related to the critical and self-reflexive orientation of artistic practice. It has particularly continued two strands of development that have been present in the field of art since the 1960s, which combine analytical dispute and social negotiation processes through mutual encroachments between artists and presenters. One strand consisted of conceptual art and institutional critique, which shifted the focus from an object-based art to an ideationally argued art of a relational and discursive disposition. One of the results of this approach was that the actions, constellations, spaces, and contexts participating in the production of meaning were transformed into a constitutive part of artistic practice. It was in consequence of this that the appropriations of curatorial activities – selecting, combining, arranging, presenting, and communicating – have taken place. In that sense, for example, Marcel Broodthaers, Michael Asher, and Daniel Buren, but also Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham, or Robert Morris, extended their activities to selecting, assembling, arranging, contextualizing, presenting, and communicating their own bodies, as well as their own and other people's artworks, public goods or private as well public spaces. They set up their own directives as alternatives to the hitherto common criteria of curatorial practice, displaying them as conventions that could likewise be changed, and proclaimed the exhibition space as such to be an integral part of artistic involvement. The decisions that were essential to the visibility of art and its diverse forms, and the positions from which they were made, as well as the criteria on which they were based and the included modes of addressing, were at the disposal – of various agents – for shaping and integrating them into the context-related procedures.

Acts of gathering or collecting, ordering, presenting, and mediating do not refer merely only to objects and information, but also to people, places, and contexts.

Parallel to that, in the course of rapidly intensifying activities in the field of art in the 1960s and its differentiation, a new professional group was formed: that of the free curators. In this context, Swiss curator Harald Szeemann may be considered a prototype. He created for himself a position in the field where exhibitions still consisted of art exhibits, but were as a whole transformed into the "artworks" of their curator. The conflict that was potentially there between agents that converged in the same field of tasks was triggered over the claim of endowing meaning. Against the organizer of

thematic mega-exhibitions or the exhibition designer who had stylized himself into a super-artist, the artists voiced the claim that they should be allowed to decide themselves on the display and contextualization of their artworks.

In the context of these developments, the curatorial field has gained its independence with respect to the profession "curator". From the task areas that were originally tied to the curator's institutionally anchored position in art institutions, the curatorial field now primarily pushes mediation into the foreground. With the goal of supplying an audience for cultural materials, information, and procedures, and of making them receptible, the exhibition – understood as a transdisciplinary and transprofessional space of appearance – has become the central medium. In this context, curatorial activity no longer has relevance only for the field of fine arts, but also for dance, theatre, and film, or for the social, humanistic, and natural sciences. It liberates the curators from the earlier invisibility of their own position and gives them a free space that is otherwise rather unusual in institutions. Curatorial activity reveals itself as a form of practice that can be used not only by curators, but also by all other agents in the field of culture. Artists of various disciplines, critics, gallery owners, dramaturges, and theoreticians of different disciplinary backgrounds, not only from the established areas of art history and cultural studies, but also from philosophy, for example, or from theory of literature, film, theatre, and dance, from ethnology, political sciences, or sociology – they all have the curatorial procedures at their disposal if they want to participate in the processes of the meaning production.

Even if social and organizational competence remains the basic ability of curators, their reputation is based to a considerable extent on their symbolizing skills. There is almost no profession in the field of culture that would define itself, at least as much as the curatorial activity does, as a profession that produces contexts. Acts of gathering or collecting, ordering, presenting, and mediating do not refer merely to objects of unusually varied origin and to information, but also to people, places, and contexts, among which they establish different references. The possibilities of these references are numerous and can always be constructed anew. To that extent, what has been assembled always remains in the state of "becoming", while individual curated elements acquire changeable and dynamic meanings during the course of such linking processes. Procedures that create meaning, namely those of selecting, assembling, arranging, and mediating, determine their particular position in the current discourse.

What has established itself is the figure of a manager of information, objects, spaces, finances, and people whose work consists of creating constellations and whose product can be described as "set".

These procedures acquire a special social relevance in their overlapping with the post-Fordist conceptions of work, which the Italian social philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato has gathered under the term "immaterial". According to him, with immaterial work the New Economy has shifted the source of richness to conceptual activities. Knowledge and skills concerning the handling of information and culture have replaced the processes of the production of goods. In accordance with the evolution from an industrial society to that of focusing on services, it is precisely the activities belonging to the so-called secondary field of services, such as management, organization, counselling, publication, and teaching, that have experienced an over-proportional growth. It goes hand in hand with this change that the differences between conception and performance, effort and creativity, author and audience, have begun to dissolve in such working processes. As a practice that encompasses organization, social networking, thematic association, motivation, facilitation, and interpretative analysis, curatorial

activity thereby connects social and self-technologies with one another in a way that corresponds to the current demands set before the economic management.

This contact and overlapping between different domains of activity and social contexts is responsible for the fact that curatorial activity does not give in to post-Fordist economic relations, but develops precisely critical dimensions, since it has to a considerable extent become a place of negotiation about conditions in the field of culture and economy. Curatorial activity appears as a cultural practice that runs across and permeates disciplines and professions, which is located somewhere between the fields of research and art, as it is related to them both and shaped by their agents. The fact that this has caused shifts of positions, processes of mutual exchange and negotiation, as well as changes in traditional role patterns, bears the risks of conflict yet at the same time indicates the special potential of the curatorial field for questioning, altering, and restructuring the existing aesthetical, social, and economic relations and conditions in the various fields of cultural practice.

It is precisely at the contact points between art, theatre, and dance that the performing arts have taken over the impulse-giving function of questioning the prevailing conditions, since it is there that the curator's position, with its alleged power and distinguished status, has become a subject of debate. Owing to the ever more blurred borderlines between the roles of artists and curators, those of directors and dramaturges have also become more permeable. First of all, in the figure of the curator – and his role has always been relationally defined – the dissolution of a uniform artistic subject and the liberation of artistic work into social, economic, and discursive systems of reference have found its emblematic implementation. It is structured per se as a multiple predicament, since the exhibiting artists must be just as satisfied as the institution which is the potential supplier of the work, contracts, and perhaps also money – and also (by no means less important) the various possible circles of audience around the performance. Whereas in the professionally differentiated conditions the curator's position is in the service of artistic implementation, as it aims at the best possible form of presenting a previously adopted meaning of an exhibit, the blurred borderlines between the curatorial and artistic fields of activity dissolve the unity of artwork and the artistic subject alike. Moreover, they exemplify an altered definition of artistic working processes, which goes further than substituting the "author, artwork, and creation" triangle through that of "producer, artwork, and production", as has become evident at large in post-1960s art. What has established itself here is the figure of a manager of information, objects, spaces, finances, and people whose work consists of creating constellations and whose manifold product can be described as a "set". The notion of set combines things that are – for a particular period of time – considered as belonging together, with associations to the sphere of theatre and film, in which it denotes the scene that has been put up in the form of a stage or a film set. It is not by chance that the subject position that constitutes itself here also shows similarities with the performing arts, as it corresponds to the tasks, authority, and status of the director in more than one respect: the curator's activity essentially consists in staging the conceptual requirements, supplied with the personal and material means that he or she has organized. Stylized into an "author", he or she becomes the last bulwark against the loss of authority of the artistic subject, by restoring its mythical functions.

However, it must also be stated that the film director and the curator are considerably different in one particular aspect, and that is that the latter produces no permanent final product. Unlike films, which retain their material substance after the performance or projection, which can be collected and archived, turning them into marketable goods, a curatorial product exists only for a limited period of time and then dissolves again into its constitutive elements, which can only then become marketable. Rather more similar to the theatre director, the curator creates a temporary constellation in which spatially and temporally structured layers of meaning compete with each other. To be sure, the exhibition practice is mostly directed at a single presentation, a one-shot performance, whereas in theatre and dance the performance is always one among many, previous or subsequent performances. And yet, exhibitions which travel to different places and situations, which are re-enacted as historical events or change during the time they are open, take on aspects of multiple theatre performances. Essentially, the analogy between theatre performance and art exhibition opens up perspectives regarding the processual moment of curatorial activity. Same as with theatre or dance, the phases of creation and presentation come into the foreground, as well as the relational dynamics during the development and performance.

The curatorial set that we are concerned with here must therefore be understood as a spatial and temporal structure of processed relations. This results in a historical strand of development that goes beyond the axes of conceptual art and free curatorship, intertwining the performing arts and the curatorial field even more tightly. What is meant here is focusing not so much on the objects, information, people, and places that are connected in the set, but rather on the relations between them. Thus, in 1969 Dan Graham wrote an article, motivated by the areas of overlapping that he observed at the time between the fields of fine arts, dance, and music, in which he dealt with, among others, Richard Serra and Bruce Nauman, as well as Steve Reich and Meredith Monk. The title of the essay was "Subject Matter" and in the German edition of Graham's writings it was translated as "Gegenstand". However, it could also be understood as the "Subjekt Materie" and then it would be easier to follow Graham's main line of argumentation, which evolved along the line of relations between artists, observers, objects, and spaces. Thereby, subjects and materials became the carriers of "in-formation", of impressions accumulated in the framework of interaction taking place between them. Graham's differentiations between various artistic positions referred primarily to who or what was to be considered responsible for such "in-formations" and what effect they had on other participating elements. With such a definition, the presentation site has become a field where positioning processes and changing relations are taking place.

Nauman and Serra placed subjects and matters in various constellations, with the aid of their own body, as well as different objects such as neon tubes or lead; performances in which they both participated also accentuated the process-oriented character of their constellating work. Especially the performance that they presented in 1970 together with Meredith Monk at the Santa Barbara Arts Festival demonstrates the relational, process-oriented way of dealing with their own body: Monk, completely in red, was moving for one hour across the stage, singing and talking. Nauman lay down on the edge of the stage, rolled towards the stage centre and back again, kept falling over the edge and climbing back on, and

then started all over again. Eventually, Serra's activities consisted in turning and lifting: occasionally, at his will, he would lift Monk and set her down again at another point of the stage. Thus, Monk, Nauman, and Serra functioned as those who structured the continually changing relations to one another, to the space, the architectural elements, and also the audience.

This historical strand, which places the accent on the constitution of relations and their changeability, can be continued with the explicitly curatorial approach that Peter Nadin adopted in 1978/79 together with Christopher d'Arcangelo and Peter Lawson in New York, at 84 West Broadway. On 9 November 1978, they launched an exhibition project with physical structures that they installed themselves – handmade interventions that the three artists performed at the same time for the lofts of other commissioners and defined as artistic work, which had surpassed the mere time invested. In a loose sequence – similar to the logic of a "cadavre esquis" – Daniel Buren, Sean Scully, Jane Reynolds, Rhys Chatham, Lawrence Weiner, Peter Fend, Dan Graham, Peter Nadin himself, as well as Louise Lawler, contributed to the exhibition during the months that followed. An advertising card documented the dates of the contributions that were added one after the other, the last date being 30 May 1979. The suicide of Christopher d'Arcangelo put an end to the project.

As a processual and relational concept that was only realized in the process and moreover retained a moment of playfulness, the New York exhibition of 1978/79 has had many followers to the present day, which have referred to it more or less directly, such as the exhibitions "Followed and to be followed" at Consortium, Dijon (1999) or "This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things" at Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2008). In this context, one should especially mention the Berlin project "The work shown in this space is a response to the existing conditions and/or work previously shown within the space 3," which took place in Spring 2000. Louise Lawler created an invitation card for the exhibition opening in May 2000, which named all the artists who had taken part in the project during the time period from 4 January until 20 May, a project that had invited artists, just as its predecessor in 1978 did, to intervene in the exhibition space one after another, reacting to the earlier interventions by other participants. Besides the contributors – Christopher Williams, Henrik Olesen, Lawrence Weiner, Simon Starling, Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset, Heimo Zobernig, Manfred Pernice, and Isa Genzken – the card recorded the date and time of the event, the duration of the project, the host institution, titles of the artistic contributions, persons in charge of the photography and type design for the card, and the exhibition title. In this way, Lawler supplied the information that one would have expected of such an invitation regarding the conventions in the exhibition milieu, yet at the same time gave visibility, with a context-analytical perspectivization, to its institutional, personal, and media-related intentions. For Lawler's card was not only a carefully designed invitation medium of "The work shown in this space [...]", but also an exhibit, the final contribution in the series of ten interventions with the situation given at the time, which took place at an irregular rhythm during somewhat less than five months. Insofar that her name was the last on the list of artists, her artwork – "This Card" – the one concluding the project. At a moment in time when the exhibition was still open, it offered a retrospective, bearing some similarity to the filmic trailer.

Rather more similar to the theatre director, the curator creates a temporary constellation in which spacially and temporally structured layers of meaning compete with each other.

Lawler's contribution has exemplified the relevance that the curatorial activity in fine arts also has for dance, film, or theatre. With her invitation

card, she performed a sort of temporalization of the exhibition, which had as its object both the "performance" as such and its self-reflexive, critical potential. Firstly, various discourses overlap and condense in the status of the invitation card between performative action and the representing object, discourses that take place around the act of presentation as a cultural practice. These bring the roles, positions, and tasks that are obviously more differentiated in the fields of dance, theatre, and film when compared to the fine arts, into a dynamic relation to one another. In the centre, there is the relationship of artworks to their presentation. Their nature, which defines the artwork as an aesthetic object, yet is no less conflict-laden for this reason, raises questions about dependencies and manoeuvre spaces that go together with presentation. Thereby a truly fundamental aspect is that of the parts of the presentation act that have been internalized or externalized by the artistic practice, which are brought into play in crossings between iconic and deictic differences. The key point of the conflict, as one may describe it, is the relationship between the presentation of an artwork to the presentation in an artwork, through an artwork, or as an artwork. Lawler's invitation card exemplifies precisely these different perspectives.

Secondly, Lawler presented a commenting, counteracting curatorial act that took as its object the temporalization of the exhibition project and then answered with a contrary gesture, disabling the process. With the card, she established her own exhibition space, which contracted the course of time and thereby avoided the intention that was pursued in 1978, namely liberating the exhibited from commodification through processuality. Information on the exhibition, which she offered on the card, transformed the loose succession of artistic contributions, their informal publication, and their transitory appearance, into a project with clear and firmly drawn outlines, structures, and contexts, substituting the instable and intangible of the ongoing process through a temporarily limited product, which had come to a standstill. As if the slow flow of subsequent activities had merged into an image with its contribution, the card thereby also addressed the possibilities and conditions of temporalization in the presentation of art. Lawler has achieved a standstill which makes the ephemeral and the processual accessible for reception and at the same moment, in the oscillation of her contribution between documentation, advertising, and an independent artistic product again, only from a different, slightly shifted perspective, raises the question of the product-like and potentially always also commodified nature of the exhibition.

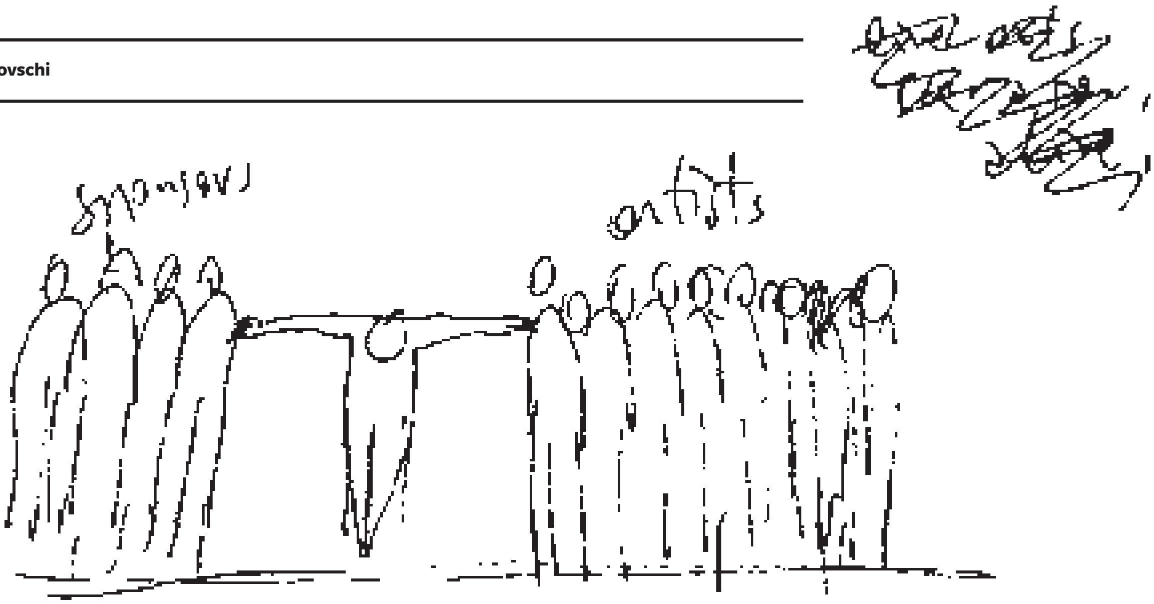
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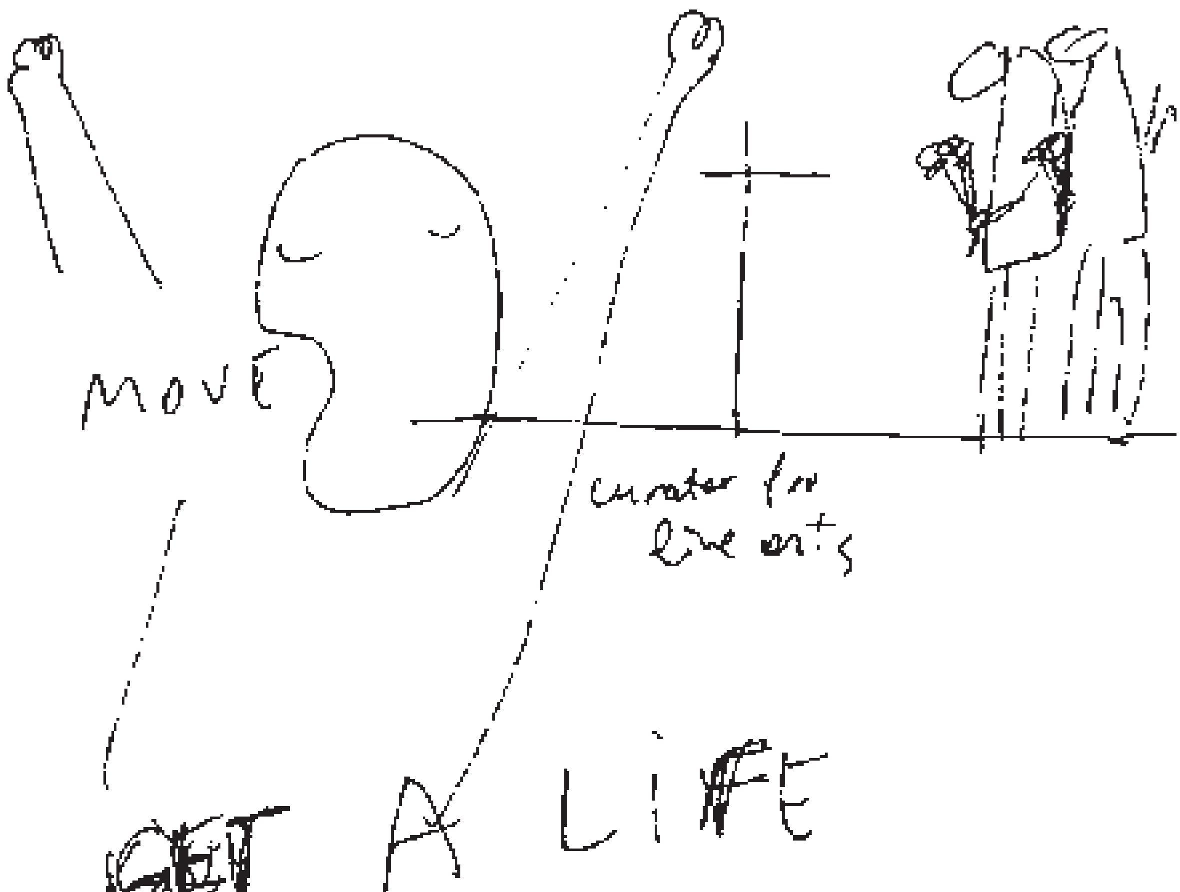
As a contributor and at the same time author of a curatorial constellation, Lawler has clearly shown that it is precisely at the contact points of the curatorial and the performing arts that its critical potential emerges. If we understand her card as being exemplary of a curatorial practice that deals in a performative, self-reflexive way with the conditions and potentials of exhibiting, performing – or, more generally, with showing and appearing – the curatorial field reveals itself as a field in which exchange and overlapping between art, theatre, film, and dance come into the foreground. It is this putting into motion of not only objects and people, but also and above all the relations that these acquire with respect to each other, as well as to space, time and the institution that constitute the specific power of the curatorial set. With this apprehension that relies on dynamic relationships and temporary constellations, the curatorial field has relevance for the production of meaning in all of the above-mentioned arts. Insofar as the tasks, methods, roles, and statuses become negotiable and restructurable

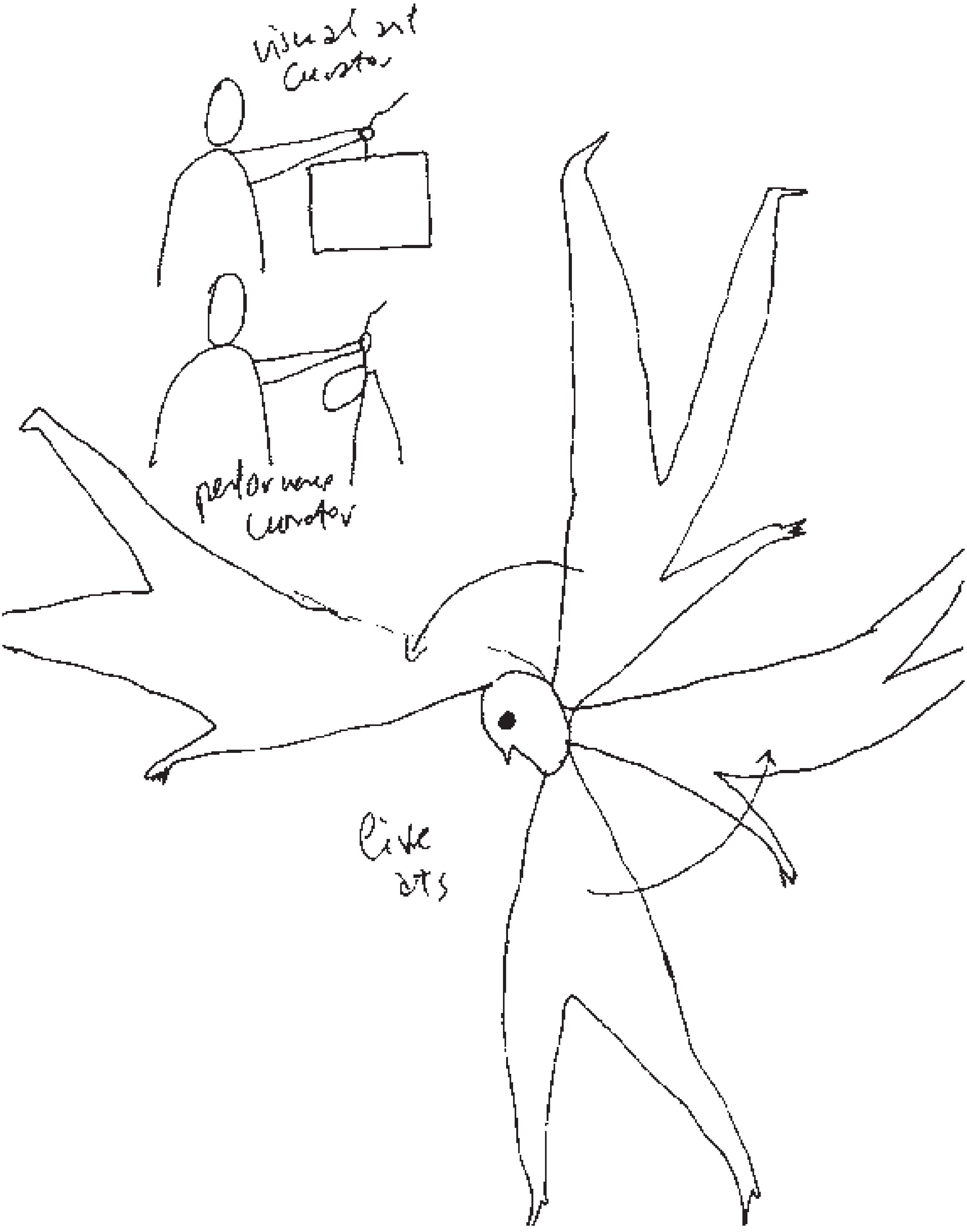
– at least ideally – among the agents in the curatorial field, among artists, curators, dramaturges, or directors, the curatorial practice also brings to debate the particular conditions and potential of becoming visible. Such an approach opens up new perspectives for art, dance, theatre, and film alike.

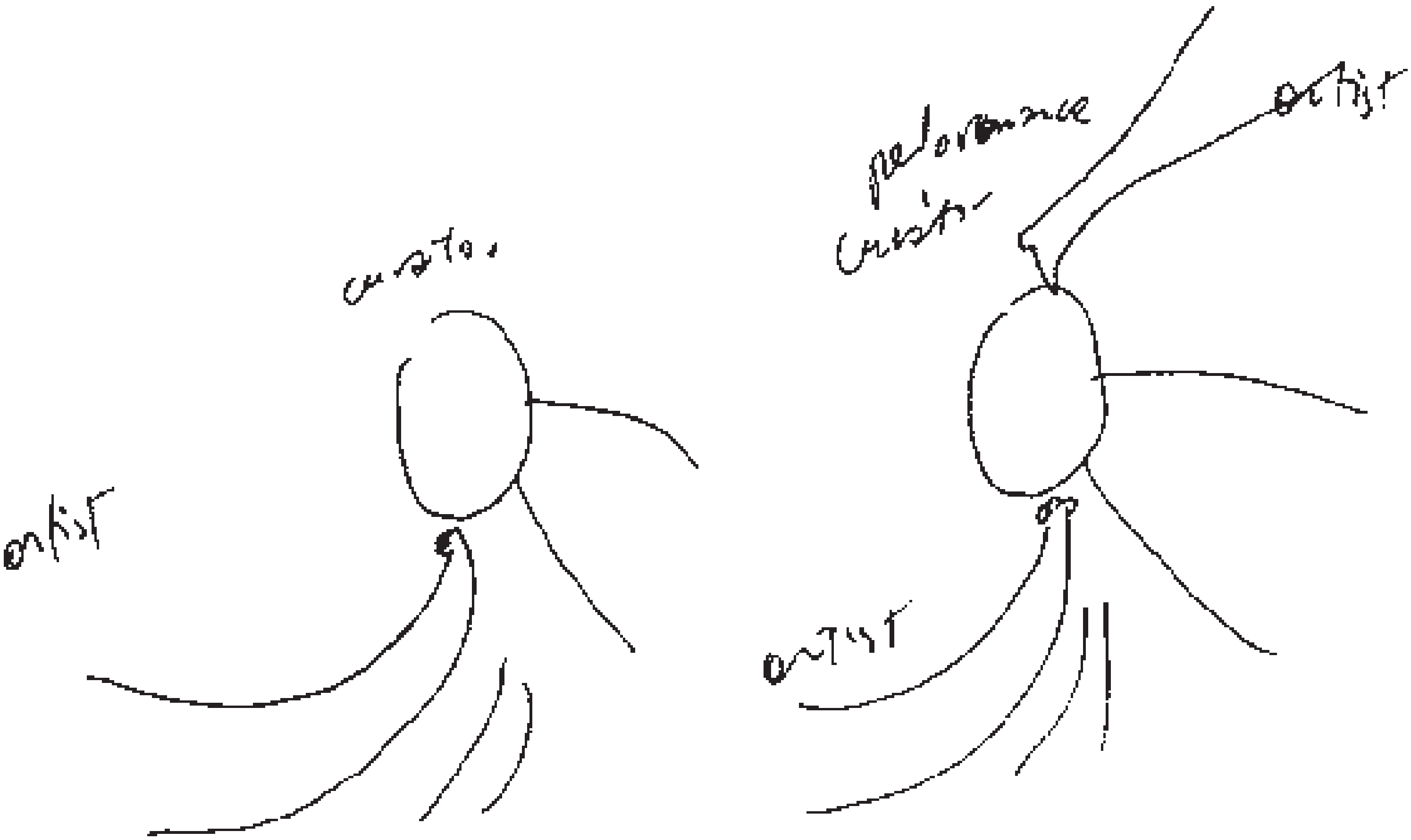
Artists, Curators and In-Between

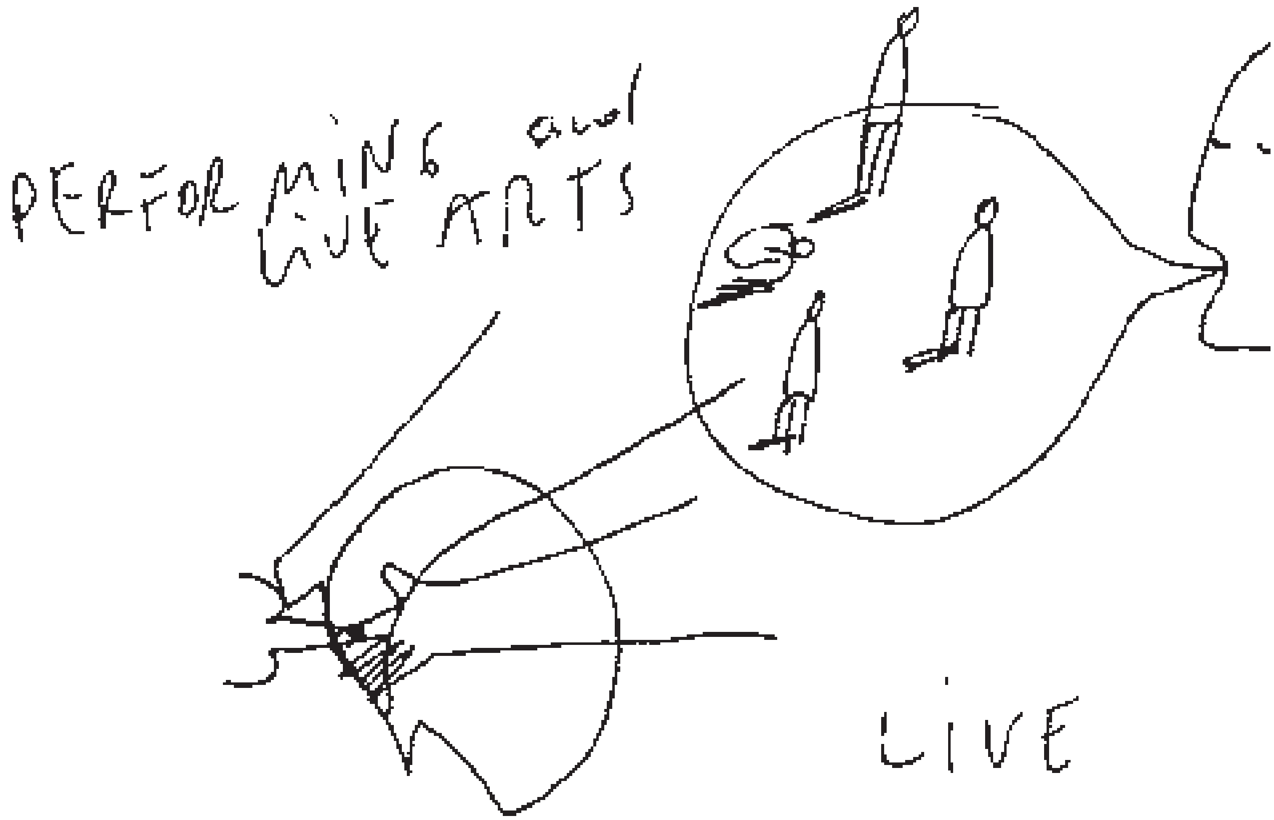
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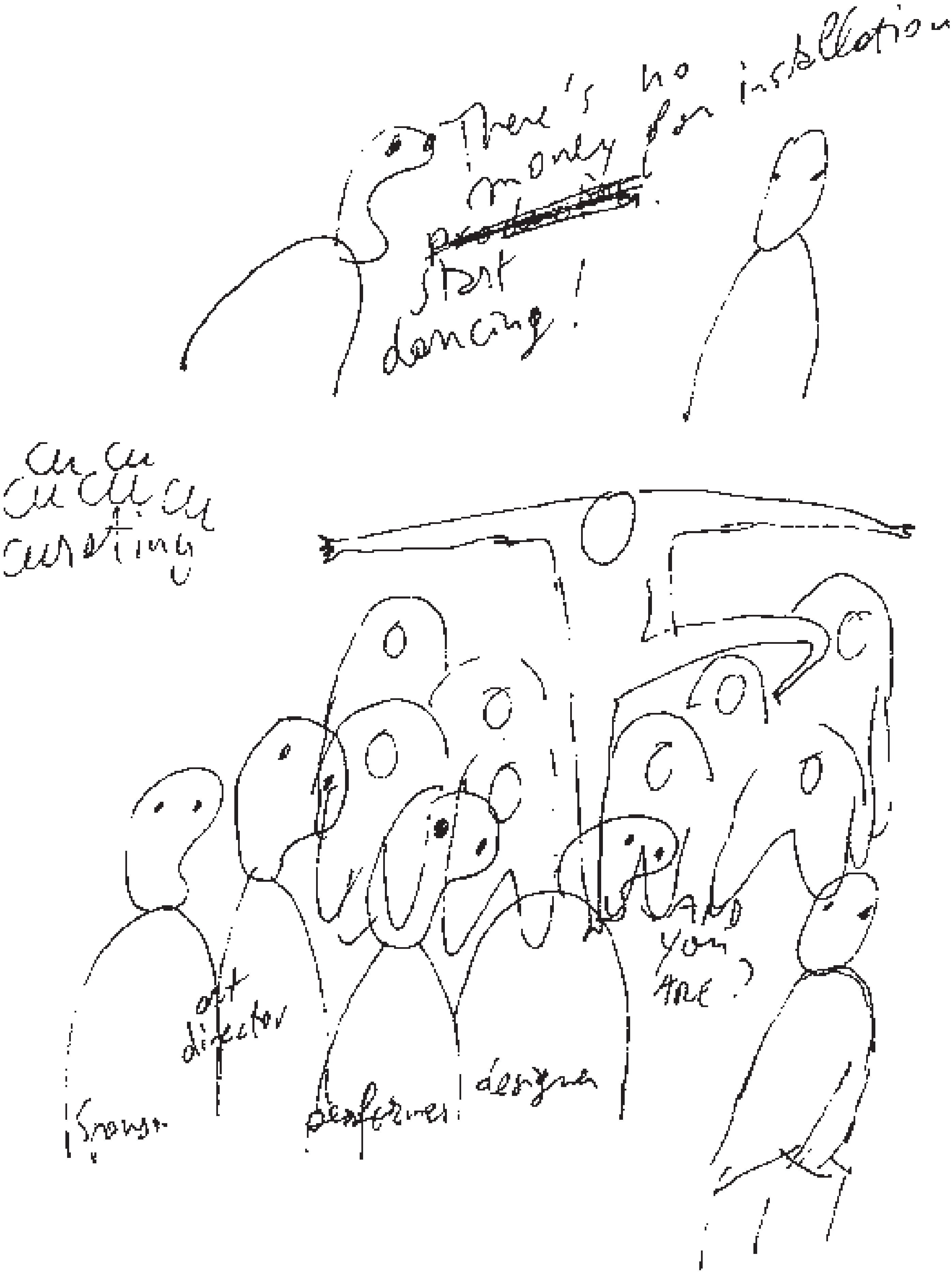





visual art curator
performance curator
live arts


curator
artist
performance curator
artist
artist


PERFORMING and LIVE ARTS
LIVE


There's no money for installation
start dancing!
curating
art director
performer
designer
And you are?

Dead Hare, Live

The curate and the service economy

Rebecca Schneider

It is not easy to delineate the "live." Any rigorous thought on the drawing of the line between "live" and "non-live" in performance runs quickly into problems. Is "live" art to be considered art where any aspect of the scene of display involves or includes humans or other beings who are alive? For surely, a stone, placed in the center of a gallery, is not "live." But, those who come to view the stone in the gallery are – presumably – live. And so, the live attend the scene of the stone, and thus the broader scene of the stone contains liveness. The live, then, can take place at any museum or gallery or theatre or exhibition space with hours open for attendance.

The issue of the participation of viewers/spectators/witnesses – however you want to label those who attend to art – has caused a great deal of textual frenzy over the past fifty years. The famous rant against "theatricality" on the part of Michael Fried allowed the aspect of the live in minimalist art to be that works' relation to spectators, and this Fried labeled as its "theatricality, its "temporality," and its "distance." The space between an art object and a live viewer (though the liveness of the viewer was not discussed in terms other than temporality) annoyed Fried in its seeming challenge of the autonomy of the object itself. Allowing for the live in *any* scene of art, that is, allowed for a temporality, a duration, that seemed to challenge the "objectness" of art itself.

We are extremely familiar with Fried's anxiety. So familiar that it seems passé. But the question remains as to whether there is anything other than live art. The question has no boundaries. Above I wrote: surely, a stone is not "live." Surely? Even this surety comes undone in the rigorous questioning of the limits of the live.

The question of whether there is anything other than live art may not be a helpful question in a journal issue dedicated to the question of how to *curate* performance-based work. For certainly, our common assumption concerning "live art" is that "live art" means that the object, the "art itself," is living and breathing. Live art is presumably composed in and of living persons, living artists or living performers, in physical, potentially face to face, relational interaction with viewers/witnesses/participants/attendees/spectators/patrons/passersby – whatever you want to call those who encounter art, whether in reverie, in critical thinking, or in passing.

But the question of *what is live* becomes inordinately complicated the moment one admits – if one can admit – that not all those who attend and participate in a scene of art are necessarily "alive" in the common understanding of what it means to be living.

Consider the question: Can the dead be in attendance? Why not? Perhaps a ghost wanders into a museum and takes part in the consumption of a scene given to play. Such a

wandering might mean that not all aspects of "live art" are necessarily live. Why is this a troubling question? Certainly religious ritual traditions of performance, séances, battle reenactments, or works of drama such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Ibsen's *Ghosts* or Kantor's *Dead Class* or Grotowski's *Acropolis* make room for the regular attendance, or at least the acknowledgement, of the pointed participation of the dead.

Similarly, a non-breathing substance may be given as "live," and a breathing one present(ed) as dead. In 1965 in *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, Joseph Beuys, holding a dead rabbit, put honey on his head as he talked, mute, to the corpse. He wrote:

> *In putting honey on my head I am clearly doing something that has to do with thinking. Human ability is not to produce honey, but to think, to produce ideas. In this way the deathlike character of thinking becomes lifelike again. For honey is undoubtedly a living substance. Human thinking can be lively too. But it can also be intellectualized to a deadly degree, and remain dead, and express its deadliness in, say, the political or pedagogic fields.[…] even a dead animal preserves more powers of intuition than some human beings with their stubborn rationality.*

The stone in the room, that is, may be "live" in a different way, as a portal even, to another kind of attendance that complicates the easy assumption that a heartbeat and breath are the only mode of being "co-present" in time. Similarly, the seeming living – breathing and thinking – may be, in profound ways, dead.

But these observations are not necessarily helpful. All well and good, one might say, but for all *practical* purposes – purposes of curation perhaps – Beuys was alive when he presented *How to Explain*, and that fact brought (and continues to bring) complications to the scene of display. Beuys, as an art object (if you will) on display, could not be *preserved*, like a painting, after the fact of performance. And to set up the space for his act required attention to details that would not have been required for the setting of a stone on a gallery floor. For many, the temporal interval of display would be marked by the fact that Beuys, live, would not always be live – *if* live means breathing, walking, talking, eating, shitting, pissing, sleeping, etc. *If* live means those exigent physical things. For Beuys, however, "honey is undoubtedly a living substance." If we acknowledge that the "live" is an open category, a contested category, a category most exciting because its limits flow, are sticky, not entirely containable, and are as yet porous and undefined, then we can not so easily dismiss the radical suggestion Beuys made in *How to Explain*: the live may not be entirely live any more than the dead may be entirely dead. The interesting quality of liveness may lie in the efforts we make in passage, between shifting states of being. For Beuys, liveness is contained rather in an attitude to mystery than in a physical attribute, and thus

his works were often labeled "ritualistic" or "shamanistic." In relation to ritual and shamanism, *preservation* becomes close attention, incantation, live reiteration (as of liturgy), or the simple openness of creative question. Elsewhere I have mentioned the reiterative duration of call and response – the way live art may take place across bodies or objects in time and across time, again and again, even in difference. If liveness implies breathing – alright then, what is breath? And who is to legislate the duration of its occurrence?

So, if, with Beuys, honey is a living substance, then would a pot of honey in a gallery be live art? With or without the "living" Beuys? Or even without the "living" Ann Hamilton? In a 1989 installation, *privation and excesses,* Hamilton laid out 750,000 copper pennies on a honey-coated floor. Behind these sat a woman in plain clothes, wringing honeyed hands over a honey-filled felt hat. And behind the woman was an enclosure of grazing sheep. I did not attend that performance, but I experience it now in my mind's eye. Something of viscosity *sticks* to the photographs I attend, live. Something of Beuys is in attendance to *privation and excesses* too – the felt, the honey, the sheep, the coins – the entire event is as if covered in Beuys' gold leaf, even now, in memory of an event I cannot remember *live* having only attended the aftermath. What part of citation, reiteration, even across difference, play in the long life of duration? And what, anyway, is the period of duration of *How to Explain*? Who legislates that the performance ended when Beuys walked away? Or Hamilton's ended when the Capp Street Project in San Francisco closed for the day? Might *How to Explain* be ongoing? Is it ongoing not only in object remains such as photographs, but in Hamilton's *privation and excesses* which is *not* a reenactment of Beuys but perhaps a riff, or a body part, or an echo, or even the stray forgotten memory of a passerby? A dead hare is not a live sheep. Copper pennies are not gold leaf. And though felt is felt, and honey is honey, a woman wringing hands is not a man offering an explanation. Or, is it? Are they? And are both of these works ongoing in my (or your) articulation of our *experiences* of these events, even after the facts of their so-called liveness, however faulty or deadly or rational or errant those articulations, as explanations, may be?

Alright. Clearly, we can trouble the limits of liveness as a category forever. But how does that help the project at hand: to deliver some thoughts on *curating* the live? Rather than troubling the category of "liveness" then, perhaps we can spend some time focusing on what it means to curate – and then find our way back to asking what it means to curate "the live."

The English word "curate" comes from the Latin *curatus,* and refers to "of, belonging to, or having a cure or charge." Of course, a "curate" was a word for a parish priest or parson, who had the charge of the souls in his congregation. (Less gravely, the word also referred to a type of cake plate.) The

word "curator" originated somewhat later, and at first referred to one who has the care or charge of a person or thing unable to care for herself, himself, itself. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives us: "One appointed as guardian of the affairs of a person legally unfit to conduct them himself, as a minor, lunatic, etc." Later the word became attached to space, and one definition of curator becomes: "The officer in charge of a museum, gallery of art, library, or the like; a keeper, custodian." It is not until 1870 that, according to *The Oxford English,* we find that to curate is: "To act as curator of (a museum, exhibits, etc.); to look after and *preserve.*"

I find this brief and admittedly spotty history of the Latin *curatus* in its English travels to be compelling. Somehow we move from ritual caretaker (parish priest) to guardian of the unfit to arrive in the 1870s at the sense of preservation and exhibition we assume for the word at present. As more and more work engages in performance, touching on aspects of the event and collectible under the rubric of "live acts," perhaps the antiquated sense of "curator" as the parish priest or caretaker of lunatics has returned to some degree? No doubt, those in the position of having to conceive, fundraise, finance, book, manage, orchestrate, and *explain* live acts to funders and to patrons, and then manage the space between live performers or live honey and live participants (sometimes conceived as witnesses, sometimes as spectators, sometimes as art patrons), have wondered whether he or she were actually tending a church of some sort, an asylum for the insane, or an orphanage for the resiliently illegitimate. At recent highly publicized "live art" events, such as Marina Abramović's *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in March 2010, the sense of worshippers at the shrine of presence (if not lunatics at the threshold of hysterical reverie) was evident everywhere. Ritual rushes in where "object" and "objectivity" are replaced by the auratic artist in the temple of High Art.

The stone in the room, that is, may be "live" in a different way, as a portal even, to another kind of attendance that complicates the easy assumption that a heartbeat and breath are the only mode of being "co-present" in time.

But not all performance-based art is an invitation to acritical worship. Think of another highly publicized New York event: Tino Sehgal's processual "This Progress" at the Guggenheim in March 2010, where children and others usher Guggenheim patrons through a set of questions about Enlightenment ideals. Or think of Sehgal's "This is Propaganda," where museum guards take the stage as art, event, or situation themselves. In Sehgal's work it is critical questions that are explicitly invited and carefully *tended.* With the orchestration of children or museum employees, and the orchestration of unanswered questions in somewhat open situations, the notion of "guardian" might return to the word "curator" in a rather pronounced, if curious, manner.

The curator, like a curate, tends to and attends to a charge: the orchestration of a situational event. That event (whether composed in and of the so-called live or the so-

called dead) may be an open event, leading to critical questions, or a closed event, requiring the disciplining of the faithful to worship. Or, perhaps, an amalgam of *both,* or a porous debate over *which.*

And thus, reader, please note: I am *not* claiming that live art is necessarily shamanistic or necessarily disciplinary or necessarily critical or necessarily acritical, even as I remind us that the Latin roots of the word curation point to the *rituals* involved in *administering to a charge*. My own preference, in any case, runs toward work that opens into creative critical inquiry and politicized thought rather than work that worships at an altar of so-called presence. As a viewer, witness, or participant in art, dance, or theatre I always submit even the most apparently Art-reverent work to critical inquiry, for I do not see critical inquiry as irreverent. However, I would not claim that another attendee, who chooses against critical inquiry, would be *wrong.* I do not think that art, artists, art patrons, curators, or historians can legislate any singular meaning to the experience of an event, object, context, or act. But we can *curate* such events – curate, tend, guard, and shepherd – questions. Such as questions that attend to the limits of liveness or our investments in liveness, and we can, indeed, pose *living* (open) questions about the very events we experience.

A great deal more work can be done on precisely how immaterial affect circulates as immaterial commodity – that is how afect as commodity is produced, paid for, exchanged – across the bodies. Who benefits and how?

In the spirit of questions, I leave the reader with one question I find particularly important today. In my opinion, it is important to ask how contemporary interest in "live art" is related to the scene of global capital today, in which, reductively speaking, object-based commodity capitalism (with commodities produced largely in industrial nations) has been augmented (if not replaced) by the full force of an affect-driven service economy in what are now called post-industrial societies. If the historical avant-garde turned away from the object toward performance in order, at least in part, to challenge the broad social investment in the production and circulation of commodity objects (including commodified art), in what way does "dematerialized art" (though that phrase is problematic as the living body is clearly material) offer an arena for the critique of a neoliberal service economy that trades in the circulation, purchase, and expenditure of live experience, or *affective engagement?*

This question is, in some ways, overly obvious, and yet a great deal more work can be done on precisely how immaterial affect circulates as immaterial commodity – that is, how affect *as* commodity is produced, paid for, exchanged – across bodies. Who benefits and how? Sometimes the body producing the performance is the body of the performance artist him or herself, but often, today, performance art is delegated to "other persons," or animals, or even objects, who reenact, or stand in, or are in other ways instructed (and sometimes paid) to realize, live, an artists' artwork. In

performance, it is the "services" that are bought and sold. Experiences in time, rather than goods considered durable and "timeless," are manufactured and exchanged in venues open to such exhibition.

Of course, the selling of experience has contributed to the many questions that attend the role of documentation relative to performance art today. It has been habitual to claim that the photograph is *not* the performance itself. Yet, more and more, photographs of events at one time considered non-reproduceable acts are treated as scripts for *future* live performance, whether reenactments or interpretations, re-dos or riffs on precedence. That is, photographs are *not* the live art but are also *not not* the live art. They become part and parcel of an ongoing, ever-changing temporal stream of exchange. Conservative artists intent on preservation and securing the "rights" of so-called "seminal artists" (a phrase preferred by Marina Abramović) have worked to shut down accessibility so that museums (or individuals, corporations, etc.) might own the rights to live performances (and collectors reap the financial benefits), much as playwrights or their estates can determine the future of any production of a theatre play. But not all who trade in live art are conservative, and curators and the spaces they curate will be in a position to impact whether the future is *open* or *closed* for exploration in live art. The issue of the laboring body – and the fact that the creation of live art is often collaborative or collective – are issues that deeply threaten the long tradition of solo artist/singular genius that forms the backbone of the visual art industry. Dance and theatre have long been more collective artforms – despite the fact that playwrights have too often dominated through copyright – and the *labor* of the dancer or the *labor* of the actress are labors that deserve careful address by curators, artists, and scholars thinking through live performance today.

It is somewhat too easy to claim that live performance may participate more in the vast touristic or theme-park-like market for experiences than in the market for objects. Such a claim may be reductive and deserve greater thought. Certainly, it would be a mistake to too thoroughly separate live arts, such as theatre and dance and performance art, from object arts. For theatre and dance and performance-based events have long served tourist industries and promoted (rather than critiqued or curtailed) the circulation of goods: (the photograph, the mug in the museum store, the poster, the t-shirt, the coffee table book of the exhibition, etc.). Similarly, documents of performance art have commanded a "pretty penny" in certain situations. While visual art museums (and performance-based visual artists themselves) may still shy away from comparisons with theatres or dance halls (or with theme parks) – should they, really? What role can curators play in articulating the participation of museums and exhibition spaces in the service economy? If museums have become comfortable making room (after the fact) for the critique of commodity capitalism through exhibiting documents recalling the work of earlier avant-gardes such as Dada, Fluxus, or feminist art, is there an argument to be made that current live work potentially interrogates or renders apparent for analysis the contemporary service economy – an economy that museums *already* participate in by offering art patrons an afternoon's experiential engagement with material objects?

There are many more questions to be posed and investigated in this vein of inquiry. I do think these are important questions for curators, who, one-time curates of the passage of souls, came to serve the passage of art goods. Now perhaps, curators of live arts oversee the passage of affect, the circulation of services. The live acts of artists and their laboring delegates circulate the art-commodity of experience. Will the curate interrogate the neoliberal conditions of this passage? Or serve those conditions? Or both?

Shoreditch Park,
London





Motivation at the End of Times

To gain respect is just the beginning

Mårten Spångberg

A programmer of dance comes up to me and says: "-What do you think of the program, it's nice don't you think?" What can I say? As we know, within the neo-liberal predicament that we now live, the worst is to object, to have an opinion, to show attitude. Metaphorically speaking my answer could only be: "-I'm available." If I am in the program, I can obviously not not comply and support it, and if I am not, any objection would propose that I'm jealous of those that are in and can thus only comply. Yet, I try to formulate an answer that uses a double rhetoric, proposing that the program is congenial and at the same time saying it's not. My argument could be based on an asymmetry between established and not so established acts, the lack of representation of non-western artists, weak contingency in the program and so on. Independent of my response the answer I receive in return is always the same: "-Yes, you are right, but you know our budget has been very pressured this year. We had enormous cuts for this season, and I'm really happy that we got it together at all." I accept the argument and nod understandingly.

A few months later, the same programmer shows up after seeing, let's say the premiere of a new show of mine, insinuating that it didn't entirely fulfill expectations or was simply not a masterpiece. I respond: "-Yes, you are right but you know our budget was very pressured. We really had enormous cuts for this season, and I'm really happy that we got it together at all." I don't think so! Such a line of argumentation is not acceptable emanating from the mouth of an artist. The artist acts, it is assumed, independently of budgets, and if there are cuts, subsidies missing or similar, the artist is supposed to change the format, come up with solutions, sack the producer. Make a duet or solo, with less rehearsal hours, get another co-producer, hire faster dancers. But who would expect a programmer to sack some people in the organization, do the cleaning or accounting, double as a technician or wardrobe assistant? Programmers are victims of external circumstances, whereas artists only have themselves to blame.

For programmers to gain my respect, stop using budget cuts as an argument.

So my response is always implicitly "-I'm available". Whatever the price, whatever the circumstances, whatever the proposition is, in the era of projects we are all always available. In our current economic flow, as Boris Groys recently argued, it doesn't really matter if one is in the program or not, what matters is to have a project, in particular to have a project that can attach to many enough surfaces and connect to many enough other projects. In fact, it doesn't matter what the project is, as long as it promotes a specific identity. What the artist today is busy with is not primarily to make pieces or to articulate concepts but to produce identities that are at the same time specific enough to make a difference and conventional enough to maintain a rather romantic image of what the artist should be occupied with. The really clever artist has stopped making pieces at all, but jumps from residency to residency, from lab to lab, project to project. What matters today is not products, pieces or premieres but activity and mobility. As Krõõt Juurak has proposed, the artist has become a pet, a domesticated creature that bides his time, sits in cafés scribbling in a notebook or being busy e-mailing.

When Paulo Virno argues in *The Grammar of the Multitude* that the contemporary worker has become a virtuoso in talking, using the dancer as an example of the immaterial laborer, he doesn't presuppose anything positive but rather raises a warning: what do we do now when we *are* labor and there is absolutely no way out. When control has become omnipresent, in and through ourselves, there can be no exit door to sneak out of. "-I'm available" is in our contemporary times substituting any claim of an avant-garde or subversive attempt. And for those who still insist, who keep on trying to break rules or conventions, who work too hard, or forget about balancing their presence, not keeping their cool, the culture of availability has only one answer: You're a fool.

For artists to gain my respect, be foolish and fuck balance.

A programmer of dance announces to me the importance he poses on composing a program for his local audience. I support the argument, but wonder what it is that makes certain dance and performance acts, works by certain artists or groups perfect for every local audience in every corner of Europe? It cannot be because those acts are so generic that they fit everything hence that would dismiss the argument of being susceptible to the needs of the local audience. Nor can it be because these acts are so specific, then they would not be presented in every festival and season program. The argument must be found somewhere else? It is my belief that what *local audience* implies is not the spectator but local politicians. It means: "-I have to present a program that is agreeable to local subsidy agencies", and they expect, more or less without exception, a well-meaning mixture of local acts and international reputation.

For programmers to gain my respect, stop using the local audience as an argument when what it means is serving local politicians.

An alternative chain of arguments on the same issue emphasize identity production. Working for a specific local audience implies that the programmer feels responsibility to the progression of a local scene and its audience, but then again how come this responsibility without exception includes three, five or ten internationally celebrated artists or groups. Is it possibly so that the programmer rather easily forgets his assumed responsibility and instead seeks confirmation in other programmers? It feels good, and needs no further explanation, to say: "-Yes, I'm also showing their

new work." or "-I've been keeping my eye on them for several years and I think my audience is ready for them now."

The same argument is evidently valid for the artist too. It feels good to belong to a context and is obviously uncomfortable to issue one or other conflict. Over the fifteen years that I have been engaged in dance and performance I have never experienced such a lack of conflict as today. The first dictum of contemporary cultural entrepreneurship: Don't ever get angry!

Don't be critical either! Since for years critique has been replaced by criticality, the ethical version of the ideologically saturated notion of critique. Criticality is like a touch pad, the theatrical version of pure navigation, the entrepreneur's variation of risk performing the endless shifts of neo-liberal governance. It's the slippery escape from any form of responsibility, a smug smile standing in for a lack of guts to stake out a territory. Criticality is good for you, it's kind of participatory, it's implementing the individual instead of producing public spectacle. In the land of criticality everything is fine. It's Prozac for cultural producers, personal without passion, skepticism without fundament, the epitome of opportunism.

“So my response is always implicitly ”– I'm available”. Whatever the price, whatever the circumstances, whatever the proposition is, in the era of projects we are all always available.

For an artist to gain my respect, raise your voice and judge. Be, or pretend to be rich enough, to afford being categorical.

It appears paradoxical that at the same time as dance and performance is offered more opportunities than ever before, both concerning performances, residencies and other projects, we simultaneously experience an equalization of what is tolerated. The differences between dance performances were probably smaller twenty years ago, but I don't think it is only memory that plays around with my perception. Dance looked similar, what differed was the production value. Not only in economical terms, but in respect of global circumstances. Dance has become professional to the extent that it has lost its passion. Dance has become enthusiastic which is another word for shrinking in front of circumstances.

It is my guess that, among other reasons, contemporary education has become so good in preparing students for established markets that they simply don't know what else to do but to comply, be enthusiastic and perform criticality. It mustn't be the responsibility of education to teach students to fit in, rather the contrary: the task should be the opposite, to encourage the student to pursue other paths, different formats to stop confirming existing markets. This can not be done by preaching counter ideology or by blaming the market, but rather through allowing the student not to identify with what a dancer, choreographer or performance maker is, i.e. to appropriate identity. It feels good and is comfortable to *be* a choreographer and it's a shaky path to create ones own territory.

A few years ago French thinker Jacques Rancière contributed to our context with a text entitled *The Emancipated Spectator*, where he argues that theatre per definition is stultifying and as a way out proposed an activated spectator, that without becoming a participant one can activate him- or herself not on the basis of identity but rather in respect of individuation, i.e. expanding the possibility for what the individual can be. We should however remember that the emancipated individual is congenial to our present political climate. Emancipation for Rancière does not mean to be, or become more oneself, but on the contrary to contest one's identity and what constitutes identity (in general) in our specific contexts and environments.

For artists to gain my respect, stop pretending to emancipate yourself when what you want most of all is to belong.

A programmer of dance tells me how important it is to engage in the development of the local scene. I wonder, but how does it happen that you pay them, the locals, fees that are peanuts in comparison to what you pay international celebrities? Is that some contemporary form of care? By the way, how does it happen that the local and non-established artists are always presented on the "small" stage and always in the middle of the week. If you are keen on promoting the local scene why not offer them the central venue on the weekend. If the international celebrity anyway brings in an audience (which is always why they are there "-We have to have a few big shows, you know – we need to secure a general audience." Nobody seems to like it, really.), why not program them on Monday and Tuesday?

A programmer of dance tells me that the development of the local scene is so important that they have created a lab for their artists to engage. A forum for discussion and confrontation, research and development, when what it tends to boil down to is that the lab is an excuse to not have to present those artists properly, and yet swear yourself free from any kind of accusation of excluding the local. And by the way, everybody knows that the participants in the lab never get paid in accord with a performance fee. Labs are cheap solutions, end of discussion.

In commercial industries it is common that 5-7% of the revenue is reinvested in research and development. R&D does not mean to develop a new product or design a new model, i.e. applied research but rather blue sky research. Innovation intensive business such as pharmaceuticals use up to 15% of their revenue on R&D. It is common to understand our field of action as innovation intensive, and it is a business – it's just that our client (like the weapons industry) is primarily the state, but I have never – I underline never – heard about a dance festival or season that invests more than 0% on R&D of the revenue. Commerce knows, if we don't upgrade, if we don't invest in blue sky research our clients will beat us to the finishing line, and it is not just about beating somebody else but to stay on top of oneself. The lab format gets even more patronizing when it is topped with an international authority giving a two-hour introduction to his or her artistic mission, of course after having been presented on the big stage.

During the lab the artistic director, preferably with some international colleagues, shows up – of course unannounced – appearing to be interested in the artists' creative process. What happens? Obviously, the artist will present an absolutely safe argumentation that ensures – hopefully – the opportunity to be part of the "real" program next year. I'm available! The so called labs, luckily not so popular anymore, have nothing to do with creativity, sharing ideas or motivating each other. No, it's a perfect ground for defensive warfare to maintain one's positions. What the artist today sells is ideas and originality so why would anybody think that a lab would function as an opportunity to share. No, labs consolidate the dynamics of the market and function as an eminent opportunity for programmers to surveil any kind of revolutionary tendencies. Only the extremely naïve would consider the idea of sharing, that would be similar to Coca-Cola putting their secret recipe on their web page.

The central problem with dance programming today, in which the programmer and artists are equal parts, is that ideology and conviction almost without exception has become subordinate to financial and political circumstances.

So what do we do when the opportunity to object is void and nothing? What do we do when everybody is guilty of nothing and nobody dares to

make a move as it always will harm your opportunity to… whatever it is that you do? Nobody is to blame and all of us are gladly participating in a market based on identity and belonging. Programmers as well as artists happily bend over and offer themselves to the whims of the market. Is there anything left except disillusion? The first answer must be no, but perhaps there are measures to take. And look who is talking, the first thing to do is to stop complaining, but complaining is easy as it also consolidates identity.

Over the last twenty years the visual arts sector has developed strong curatorial discourses. Perhaps not the entire field but any curator, as well as artist, with ambitions in contemporary art prides himself with an articulation due to curatorial practices, never mind if you are on the facilitating or, so to say producing side. An important consequence of such discourses is a disconnection between director and curator. Today it is rare that a director of a museum or Kunsthalle is one and the same person. A director of a museum is often curating part of a program and is obviously the final voice when it comes to fundamental decisions, but a director who puts his nose into an assigned curator's choices is rare, not to mention incorrect. In the field of dance, choreography and performance the situation is the opposite, it is almost always the director, with financial and institutional responsibility, who articulates the entire program. The emergence of the "independent" curator implies a whole set of new strategies. The independent curator, to the same extent as the artist, offers or sells a concept (a completely misused and misunderstood term) or proposal and is chosen in respect of a competitive landscape. The independent curator of course has to obey economical circumstances but the objective is not to simply stay alive but to produce specificity. This is not entirely true, there are certainly hierarchies, lobby and business as usual, but the very possibility of an independent curator offers a completely different mode of operation. A problem in dance is that directors, doubling as programmers, especially of festivals, occupy their position forever. A director of a festival can easily run a festival for decades. The result is often that the maintenance has higher priority over the quality of the program. First, if you have been the director of a festival for twenty years, of course you are not about to take a risk in programming if it might jeopardize your position, and second, after twenty years in one position, you have also closed off any other working opportunities. If contracts are generally long-term, it is obvious that flux and dynamics will decrease. Thirdly, after twenty years in a position it is very easy to forget that you are the director of a festival and that the festival is not about yourself.

So how does the independent curator market his specificity next to producing exhibitions? By engaging in a position, by articulating specific motivations in regard to aesthetics, modes of production, historical accuracy, specific knowledge and, not rarely, through a political strategy, statement or stronghold. Any curator with ambitions in the field of contemporary art negotiates aesthetics and politics through writing: in magazines, publications, catalogues or orally at conferences, seminars or in educational frames. In the field of dance similar articulations are extremely rare. Programmers hardly every give evidence to aesthetic or political positions. Objection, there are often texts in programs etc. by directors and programmers. Correct, but these statements can rarely be read as political statements and are more often similar to magazine editorials trying to justify the content of the current issue. In dance and performance it is rather understood as a big mistake to articulate a position also concerning the artist. Better not say anything, and you will not be kept responsible.

The amount of literature and magazine press within the field of visual art is immense, whereas in dance we hardly see anything of the sort. Art magazines, of different quality, flourish all over the world, but in dance there is hardly anything. With the risk of sounding patronizing, publishing (not to mention translations) and magazine production is most active in the Balkans. In the rest of Europe there is hardly a magazine worth remembering, not a single independent publishing house that I need to keep an eye on. Publishing and bookmaking is not only about identity boasting or serving ballet kids with glossy images. Publishing is a means of empowerment, of conflict and not least to produce visibility. Dancers, choreographers, makers and doers, programmers, are you fine with the fact that those who write about your work tendentiously consider dance to be at its peak sometime during the early 80s or chicken out on their ideologies because of financial difficulties or demands on sold copies. No worries, let them be, but remember it is those who write history who decide what is important. Publish yourself, your friends and enemies, and don't put up some petty argument that you are busy with the body not text; publishing is a means, and a good one, to claim territory.

Moreover, the emergence of the independent curator in the visual arts has intensified the development of new formats. Conventional formats are still up and running but over the last two decades we have seen a number of new formats taking form. Among them thematic exhibitions, biennales, shows exclusively formed around commissions or proposals utilizing entirely new media such as books, magazines, the internet or urban contexts. Compare that to the situation in dance and performance where the festival format especially has consolidated itself excessively. I personally cannot recall a single festival that has elaborated a strong proposal, or even more rarely a proposal that is controversial or excluding. The dance festival of today is void of position and is almost always a bric-a-brac of creations of the last 18 months. Lately we have seen a few brave attempts; these should be celebrated even if they are just attempts and might not work for the next fifty years.

“Having in mind that we live in a time of performance we have to take on the possible production of new formats, new modes of production and representation.

Consider that there are approximately 250 conventional black box theaters spread over Europe. How does it come that they all utilize the same marketing strategy and stick to it year after year when the lack of audience is always a central problem. Is there some central agency that has decided that a black box theatre must have a season program presented in the form of an accordion-like folder? How is it possible that the imagination of programmers, festival and season directors are so limited that the accordion has become mandatory.

Or turn the argument around, how is it possible that the dance artist spends three months on rehearsing a new piece and twenty minutes on producing the press image when the performance often is seen by less than 300 people, and the program is printed in 25,000 copies? Shouldn't we change the procedure and spend three months on the picture and rehearse 20 minutes? How is it possible that we allow five lines of generic text to present a piece of art that we have spent months or even years in preparing? Every festival and season program presents every artist with the same amount of text, five lines written to fit everybody. Such a procedure obviously favors the already established and offers hardly any opportunity for a different conception of what a performance can be to flourish.

A direct comparison with visual art and museum culture is obviously useless as circumstances are very different, and at the same time the

pressure to attractive visitors is also overwhelming there, but nevertheless visual art has developed into a much more heterogeneous field over the last 20 years than dance and performance. It is my firm belief that this has to do with the establishment of curatorial discourse, and it is because of the lack of the same that dance has ended up maintaining aging structures and strategies. If dance is to have a future it is imperative that we develop our own discourses around programming or curating. We must certainly not invite curators etc. from visual art to inform us about how it is to be done. No, we must do this on our own terms, take up the tough task of producing our own discursive terrain no matter if it will cause turbulence and havoc. There will be collateral damage, but I can ensure you nobody will die. The policy that governs contemporary dance is one of inclusion and everybody-should-be-given-the-opportunity; still, we all call for transformation. This is a paradox, if we want change it will happen on behalf of someone. Some things have to go, if we want something new to emerge.

“Every time we don't write a kick ass political statement about this year's festival, we know that the audience will not upgrade their modes of experience.

The last time we experienced a stronger shift of policy concerning dance and performance in Western Europe was in the late 70s and early 80s. Young makers and doers, supported by equally young managers, directors and programmers refused to be included and comply with the stale machinery of state theaters and similar at the time. After a few years a line of venues appeared, willing to take a risk, often without financial opportunities, to host young artists and groups. In Holland, Belgium, Germany, not to mention what later became Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, venues and festivals flourished although the scale was small. With the emergence of new theaters, often considering rather new program policies a new generation of artists and groups established themselves. Three decades later the situation has changed a lot but has it changed enough. These venues, festivals, artists and groups are obviously not willing to give up their positions, so to try to force one’s way in is not the smartest solution. Why would such major entities offer more than just enough space for young and upcoming artists, when they are good as it is? They don’t want to be overtaken or lose their positions. Festival and season programs are children of a certain time and context, we can work to make them a little bit better, a little bit more open, a little bit this or that, but there will be no major changes as long as the economy doesn’t simply collapse. So if we want something to change on a more radical level we must simply abandon ship and start from scratch. We must force ourselves to not set up another, perhaps alternative, festival. We must force ourselves not to start a new space. If we do we will just end up in the same position one more time, and the second time we will just look stupid. The curatorial discourses we have to engage in must not be concerned with “what can be done”, or better, with strategic matters. It is the structural or fundamental changes that have to be approached. Our future is not easy, because what stands in front of us is the necessity to invent new formats and radically new opportunities.

However, the future is bright. Over the last 15 to 25 years our society, our world, has seen a veritable transformation concerning production, communication and economy. Twenty-five years ago manufacturing to a large degree governed the world, but since then we have experienced a strong move towards capacities of distribution, communication and the mobility of value. One could say that the world has experienced a shift of focus from manufacturing, to production of goods, to performance and movement. Concerning art, it is obvious that a regime driven by manufacturing finds its accomplice in an art form that focuses on objects,

namely visual art. If today we live in a paradigm governed by performance, such a paradigm needs to finds its related expression in the arts. The future doesn't look bright for visual art, at least not art that is concerned with the reproduction of objects, but for dance, choreography and performance it certainly appears that we can look forward to a bright and flourishing future, but only if we let go of the established models for what those expressions can be. The theatre, festival and season program does not as, e.g. Peggy Phelan argued, promote performance in the sense of its ephemeral status; on the contrary, they handle dance and performance as objects. It is with this is mind that we live in a time of performance, that we have to take on the possible production of new formats, new modes of production and representation. If we do, we can only succeed, but it will imply a fundamental shift in our understanding of what performance, dance and choreography can be. This, however, does not mean that we have to evacuate the theatre and desperately seek new sites for representation. No, what we have to evacuate is the strategic levels of our expressions.

A director of a reasonably large festival recently stated that he was proud to welcome a certain artist to the festival for the seventeenth year in a row. I wasn't surprised, as this is what happens at more or less every festival (perhaps not seventeen), but what would surprise me is if Tate Modern's director would proudly announce the seventeenth exhibition in equally many years by one and the same artist. That is unthinkable, even considering that it might be a small piece in some overlookable group exhibition that happens every year. Every time we present for-the-nth-year, something else is not presented. Every time we install the big company in the big space, that space will not be available for something else to develop. Every time ballet-this-or-that-big-name is installed in the program, we know that something not ballet-this-or-that-big-name will not be written about in the local or national press. Every time we don't write a kick ass political statement about this year's festival, we know that the audience will not upgrade their modes of experience but will maintain their taste and identity and make circumstances to change something next year even smaller. Every time we argue that a festival or season program should have something for everybody, should be available for everyman, we have also lowered our ambitions regarding our art form and its future. Why are you making art, why are you programming a festival or season? To please everyman, the general population or audience? I hope not, because if that is our ambition there are certainly businesses that offer much better salaries and fancier parties. Have you forgotten why you are making art or why you set out to realize that first festival? Those pieces, festivals and seasons that we created even though we knew it would cost and would interfere with our personal economies? We did it because we couldn't find strong arguments enough not to, because we had no smaller ambitions than to change the world, because dance, choreography and performance were synonymous with life and death. Pathetic, oh yes, but pathetic enough to forget? Have we forgotten our mission statements, did we change them from "until death" to "until budget cuts"?

Fifteen or so years ago networks showed up as the new fad. The motivation was to share expenses, to discover new artists (often from exotic places like the Balkans) and support upcoming artists. What has happened today? Networks today are a means to consolidate power, and hence by definition – homogenizing. Oh yes, we love to support those artists from the Balkans but only one year, not 17 in a row. Today a production that is not

promoted by an international network is an impossibility. There are exceptions but that is not the issue here, but what is is to what extent we, programmers and artists, are willing to sell out specificity in favor of fitting in. Networks are for dance what ecology is for animals, a restrictive baby-sitter that places the poor animal in a restricted area. "-Here you go, play here but not too loud." Stop being so fucking civilized and take the risk of being considered a fool.

Recently I looked into a well-known theater's statistics and found out that one and the same company had been presented on average ten nights per season. Considering that all performances were sold out, the total amount of sold tickets would be approximately 10,000. That's a third of the audience that the local outdoors concert arena could host in one night. So why not present the big company one night at the Olympia stadium instead of ten nights at the theatre. The counter argument is obvious. "-Dance has to be experienced direct, it is about presence…" and so on, but what is the difference between dance and a concert with Metallica that nobody has a problem in sharing with 50,000 other people looking at video screens. As far as I can remember, nobody had a problem with authenticity when Rolling Stones performed in front of 1.2 million people at Copacabana in 2005. So why isn't the big dance company presented on the same beach? It's not because of the above arguments, it's because if the size of the economy gets big enough, big money is also moving in. Better to continue presenting the big company in the theatre so that nothing will change. Tate Modern is a good or possibly bad example that things can change and scale is relative. Ten years ago it was unimaginable that an artist would move into the Turbine Hall and today it's rather obligatory for an artist to reach star Olafur Eliasson's and the Rolling Stones – who had more or less the same amount of visitors – capacity. They just did it a bit quicker, but then why can't Rosas, Jérôme Bel or Jiří Kylián have 1.2 million people looking at their work?

The problem with dance is its performed little brother concept, which is in fact just hiding in the corner not to have to compete with the big guys.

Only if our expression develops a decent curatorial discourse can we produce proper arguments against the ridiculous argumentation above, but as long as we don't, we will always be subject to the whims of local politicians, the well-meaning hand of state cultural policy, and will never be able to defend ourselves against budget cuts and identity hungry misery.

Break it, stretch it, bend it, crush it, crack it, fold it.

8. ***Drift***. *Allow yourself to wander aimlessly. Explore adjacencies. Lack judgement. Postpone criticism.*
9. ***Begin anywhere***. *John Cage tells us that not knowing where to begin is a common form of paralysis. His advice: begin anywhere.*
13. ***Slow down***. *Desynchronize from standard time frames and surprising opportunities may present themselves.*
16. ***Collaborate***. *The space between people working together is filled with conflict, friction, strife, exhilaration, delight, and vast creative potential.*
28. ***Make new words. Expand the lexicon.*** *The new conditions demand a new way of thinking. The thinking demands new forms of expression. The expression generates new conditions.*
37. ***Break it, stretch it, bend it, crush it, crack it, fold it.***
40. ***Avoid fields. Jump fences.*** *Disciplinary boundaries and regulatory regimes are attempts to control the wilding of creative life. They are often understandable efforts to order what are manifold, complex, evolutionary processes. Our job is to jump the fences and cross the fields.*

Bruce Mau, "An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth"
– 43 theses

For a different culture of seeing, reflecting and producing

Christine Peters

Translated from the Croatian by Marina Miladinov

When it comes to work today, we are experiencing a general change regarding both the modes of production and the context within which the increasingly project-based work is performed – not least within the cultural production and its transfer of knowledge. In art, collaborative and interdisciplinary working methods are challenging the idea of the curator as an individual author while global markets are becoming overwhelmingly differentiated and un-transparent. Within these changes, well-established networks seem simply out-dated. Of course, all this is accompanied by a corresponding change in contemporary formats of production and presentation – but unfortunately the keyword is indeed "react": additional strategies of presentation are developed, which do not surpass the standardized ones and present themselves only as complementary to the actual exhibition, the actual festival, etc. – such as the project-based lounge zones with archives and reading rooms, or interactive info-displays, which merely

enlarge the variety of offer. They, however, cannot replace long-term strategies when it comes to developing a far more consistent and structurally progressive logic of production. Complementary displays populate a parallel world, define a market within the market, and mostly function free from the programmatic work in question, thus soon vanishing again from our view and our memory, sooner than we would perhaps like. However, what we would urgently need is a permanent confrontation of various ways of thinking and working in the professional field of art, if we want to use the existing institutions and resources for things that were not possible before. We need to unlock new possibilities, contexts, and networks, otherwise they will remain inaccessible.

The goal here should be to expand the time and space for what we are doing: time and space for creating new climates, hassle-free working atmospheres in which the inherently viral processes in question could be made transparent, reconstructable, cross-linked, subject to reflection and criticism, in such a way that all these developments would be of use to the participating artists and staff that work in this field. Therefore, on the one hand it is of eminent importance to establish a wider context for meeting each other by developing a long-term and content-oriented agenda which deals with questions of the socio-cultural and aesthetic environment of the to be produced artefacts and supported artists. It is precisely the festivals and biennials that are visible mainly in the time-period in which they take place, generating highlights and only briefly vitalizing their cultural environment. And if they are thematically oriented, the discourses on which they focus are activated temporarily; their questions are concentrated and ticked off in lectures, workshops, and panel discussions among the experts. These standardized forms of temporary cultural activity thwart the chances of its broader radiation and reception, of creating a critical public, which could be achieved if the programmatic reflection went hand in hand with the development of flexible dramaturgies of production and presentation, both in preparation and in post-processing, in order to establish another culture of transparency with regard to the underlying criteria for selection and support. In this respect, curating would imply developing different structures for the production and presentation of cultural artefacts, as well as generating a different permeability as to the topics inherent in a programme. These might be realised, for example, through nomadic platforms which cross-link a city's existing creative resources in order to mark the cultural life all year round, while its results could remain subject to criticism through follow-ups and function as ferments for future agendas.

The only problem is that many institutions, biennials, and systems of sponsoring find it difficult to imagine new artistic and curatorial approaches in structurally long-term forms like the above mentioned one. More precisely, the festivals and biennials tend to defend themselves by arguing that projects spanning over several years cannot be arranged or financed, and that one should not repeat the same things too much, for example by collaborating with the same artists again and again; instead, one should cater to the tangible pressure of an audience permanently craving for new things. However, the pressure of productions that goes along with that, including tight deadlines for preparation and post-processing, as well as dealing with a huge variety of program offers, not mentioning the reduced subsidies, imposes a breathtaking rhythm and results in constant exhaustion that – given the fact that it is all primarily about human resources – can no longer be justified. How can we halt this attitude in an unprogressive curating that subjects itself to dry politics and voluntarily agrees to a service-based production and its commodification? Of course, in artistic and curatorial production having more time does not necessarily mean better quality. No one claims that. Many artists, however, already plan projects that run for several years, with time niches for critical dialogue and manoeuvre space for appropriate post-production, or set up specialized agendas. For example, in developing growing archives (such as a performative model, digital archive, library, and so on) which can with time generate considerable critical potential. Thus,

> The goal should be to expand the time and space for what we are doing: for creating new climates, hassle-free working atmospheres in which the inherently viral processes in question could be made transparent, reconstructable, cross-linked, and subject to reflection and criticism.

the conception and communication of a different culture of seeing, reflecting, and producing – for example, regarding the complexity of selective criteria = their inclusion and exclusion principles, their cultural contexts, etc., can perfectly well be taken as a starting point and contact surface for an in-depth curatorial debate.

Thematically oriented festivals and exhibitions in particular often have the problem that they are unable to overcome their ambitious adherence to keywords and theses, and since the presented art cannot answer to these claims, it appears undeservedly deficient and small. Here it would be beneficial, for example, to devote more time in advance to conversation with the involved artists or even experts from different disciplines in order to present a topic in all its complexity, in a more multi-layered way, and to reflect on structural alternatives. It certainly requires a considerable amount of risk readiness, as well as sensibility, if one wishes to develop and implement new forms of cultural work, since time is money. Besides, such a strategy presupposes, first and foremost, a re-evaluation of priorities for all annual expenditures, which would do away with all outdated profitability formulas à la "XX days of event = XX artists x XX projects from XX countries at XX locations for XX visitors = tickets". Because not only cultural agents and artists are subjected to a raging standstill that manifests itself particularly in a product-ditching shortly after its public launch. The audience often as well fails to orient itself straightaway in all those short-lived discourses on contemporary production, in that crossover of theory and practice, of transdisciplinary formats, and a cultural offering of overwhelming variety, especially if these offers remain stuck in one-time presentations and fail to open spaces for resonance. Moreover, this old scheme of action counteracts the permanent pressure of success in terms of opening up new segments of public, since the "one-shot" strategy cannot be a long-term one, because here one also needs some breath in communicating with the new recipients.

Thus, for example, the idea of a touring festival called Theater der Welt, which takes place every third year in a

different German town and was conceived 30 years ago by theatre scholar and art critic Ivan Nagel (under the umbrella of ITI – International Theatre Institute), an idea that made sense at the time, is now long outdated as a model for finding new ways of transcultural cooperation – and meanwhile it is even structurally counter-productive. The festival, financed from municipal, public, and private sources, spends relatively huge amounts of energy (money and human resources) in order to set up various infrastructures (such as offices, databanks, CI and internet display) for an event that lasts three weeks at the most and eventually moves on, moreover poorly archived and reflected upon, mostly due to a lack of time and money. With a preparation period of one and half years at the most, the involved artistic management, now with a new team, must not only offer an internationally top-class programme, but also conquer a whole city, or even – as in the 2010 edition, on the occasion of the mainstream event Cultural Capital Ruhr 2010 – two cities (Essen and Mülheim an der Ruhr). On top of that, the city's tourist marketing counts on a capacity utilization of at least 70 percent (and 90 would be better… of course…). In 2010 it was: 18 days, 2 cities, 32 ambitious projects at around 20 venues. But it could be worse. The grand failure of the 2002 edition, which united as many as 40 theatre productions on 10 performance days in four cities (Düsseldorf, Cologne, Bonn, Duisburg) and was, owing to this fragmentation, unable to create any festival atmosphere in the urban texture, revealed once again the absurdity of a short-sighted cultural policy. As for the triennials like this one, projects running for several years are excluded at the outset anyway, since the new curators are unwilling to take over the old burdens of their predecessors, preferring to make a fresh start with fresh capital. Certainly, co-productions guarantee the long-term diffusion of a production, but they cannot be structurally efficient either as to the establishment of a different time culture at the particular location.

Nevertheless, there are artists that resist this craving for a one-time event, as shown by the example of the recent

documenta 12, where a listed artist was a cook who did not want to be an artist at all and refused to cater for a mass audience, since he knew what was good for him and his cooking. And that good cooking needs time and space for research and experimentation. In his "23 Principles", Ferran Adrià defined his processual model of gastronomic practice that, in a continuous mixture of cultural practices, produces continuous shifts of context and new meanings.

9. *The information given off by a dish is enjoyed through the senses; it is also enjoyed and interpreted by reflection.*
11. *The technique-concept search is the apex of the creative pyramid.*
12. *Creation involves teamwork. In addition, research has become consolidated as a new feature of the culinary creative process.*
21. *Decontextualisation, irony, spectacle, performance are completely legitimate, as long as they are not superficial but respond to, or are closely bound up with, a process of gastronomic reflection.*
23. *Knowledge and/or collaboration with experts from different fields (gastronomic culture, history, industrial design, etc.) is essential for progress in cooking. In particular collaboration with the food industry and the scientific world has brought about fundamental advances. Sharing this knowledge among cooking professionals has contributed to this evolution.*

Ferran Adrià, "A Synthesis of elBulli cuisine"
– 23 Principles of *El Bulli* cooking

A good example of sustainability and generating a critical public beyond the event culture is the *Sarai* initiative, existing in New Delhi since 1998. Founded as a coalition of researchers, artists, and media practitioners (co-initiated by the Raqs Media Collective, among others), Sarai sees itself as a research-based and practice-oriented model that functions in close connection to the disadvantaged parts of the city and is involved, for example, through stipends, fellowships, and its "Cybermohalla" media project, in alternative sponsoring projects in the fields of creativity, research, and education – all year round and over multiple years. For example, through access to free and open-source software, distribution of copyleft publications, granting access to all archives for researchers and practitioners, etc., or by establishing a "robust platform committed to critical discourse, freedom of expression and the exploration of the relationship between human rights, civil liberties and the efforts to ensure the viability of democratic ethic with regard to media and information practices" (www.sarai.net).

A lot can be learned from thinkers and doers such as these who keep augmenting their expert knowledge through their interdisciplinary permeability and by practicing tireless permanence. Especially by acknowledging the fact that they have the ability to change and overcome the constructs of reality whose creators have carelessly forfeited its interpretative potential long ago.

They do exist, these holes in the fence, if one takes these tasks seriously and ventures on the quest in exchange with progressive thinkers and structures, I am totally sure of that. The future generations of cultural agents will be grateful.

43. ***Power to the people.*** *Play can only happen when people feel they have control over their lives. We can't be free agents if we're not free.*

Bruce Mau, "An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth"
– 43 theses

A lot can be learned from thinkers and doers who keep augmenting their expert knowledge through their interdisciplinary permeability and by practicing tireless permanence.

The Globe Theatre,
London





At least One-third of the Subject

Rabih Mroué

Translated from the Arabic by Ziad Nawfal

– 1 –
No Idea

We as artists usually receive invitations from abroad (or locally) to present our work there (or here), by way of individuals who represent organizations or artistic and cultural institutions, or who do not represent anyone but themselves. They come to us, they contact us, they meet with us and they leave… what are they looking for? I have no idea. Maybe for something new, something different, alternative, a new language, new blood… Or rather, to create some ideas, to pose some questions related to certain problems such as the artist's relationship to power, or similar. I have no idea. Maybe they are on the lookout for new commodities for their respective markets, or for an Orient they have heard so much about, an Orient they have missed greatly, or… I really have no idea. My belief is that they all have their own motivations and purposes. Each one of them has his or her own reasons, desires and objectives. Really, I have no idea.

They come to us, to Beirut or any other place, they come to us from Beirut or from any other place, they contemplate the artworks and meet with their makers, they write down the details of the interview in notebooks, and they leave. And we, in turn, we go on with our little lives and we forget, or we pretend to have forgotten whom we have met.

Suddenly, one of us receives an invitation to participate, while another doesn't. Why? I really have no idea. Sometimes I succeed in understanding the reasons, but most of the time I don't.

– 2 –
Pure gain?

Sometimes I am commissioned to produce an artwork revolving around a certain theme, which falls outside my actual artistic, intellectual, and political concerns. I try to avoid the assignment, but always find myself complying with the curator's desires. I prepare what is required from me, as a pupil trying his best to satisfy his teacher. My friends and colleagues accuse me of not knowing how to say "No". I always convince myself, however, that what was accomplished despite my will is pure gain, since it would not have seen the light of day if it wasn't commissioned.

– 3 –
Ambassadors

I notice that I leave Beirut as an individual, but no sooner have I left then I turn into a spokesman for the nation. I become the emissary of Lebanon in spite of myself. I am asked to voice an opinion and a clear position about several political and cultural matters and others, such as suicide bombings, U.S. policy in the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli struggle, the Lebanese wars, the role of Syria in Lebanon, Iran, Islam and the West, theatre in Lebanon and the Arab world, censorship, the role of the government in supporting local art and culture, and other subjects. All of this, in a few minutes, whose number does not exceed sixty at best.

– 4 –
What is to be done?

Once, a journalist warned the curators of the risks of working with the same artists and intellectuals over a period of time exceeding three years. He insisted that doing so would cause the curator to face dangerous accusations, such as the foundation of a cultural current with a single vision and one artistic direction, which might influence the thoughts of the young generations; or consecrating a gang of intellectuals who do not perform their national or humane duties in paving the way for a cultural awakening, which in turn would prevent wars and aggression. He added that curators should work with the greatest possible number of artists and intellectuals, in order to avoid repetition, moodiness and subjectivity, and the taking of sides for one artist against the other. All of these matters contribute in causing new wounds within society, rather than healing old ones. In order to avoid generalizations, the journalist gave an example from Beirut, which included a list of those artists whose names were repeated edition after edition of the same event. And what a surprise, my name was mentioned in his accusatory list, which included more or less ten names. Oh! What is to be done?

– 5 –
The first one and last

Once I was given the opportunity to play the role of curator, which I agreed to. In my introduction to the audience, I wrote the following:

First, let me introduce myself: my name is Rabih Mroué and I am the curator of this event. To say I am a curator sounds strange to my ears, since this event is my first one, and I hope the last.

I am an artist myself, and to be honest it is not an easy task to be in a position where I have to select from the many works that were made by other artists, who happen to be my colleagues and friends. I never thought that I would play this role, and have the authority to decide what to include and what to exclude. And this is why I say that this could be the last time I do it, as I hate to be in this position.

(...)

In fact, there are more than 20 artists and intellectuals who have travelled from Beirut to Berlin, neither to represent Beirut, nor to represent the cultural situation in Beirut. Of course we have not come here to teach you about the political situation in our country, or even to give you an idea of what is going on there. Actually, we are here as individuals; each one of us brings her/his own questions and her/his own individual angst; each one of us represents her or himself. We have taken the advantage of our presence here in an attempt to create a distance between ourselves and the region we came from, an attempt to better understand the situation there, and consequently to create words and images, far removed from deterministic political mobilizations and from canonical thoughts and texts readymade for media consumption. It is an attempt to question once again what is already taken for granted in a country and in a world, which constantly require us to declare our affiliations without questioning, and relentlessly pressure us to radically align ourselves with one side against another.

That is why, you as spectators, audience and visitors should not expect to see works and hear talks that will provide you with an "understanding". Because we are here with our complexities and peculiarities and we are not going to simplify them or explain anything for you, in order for them to become "understandable". We are aware that you

yourselves will not expect us to behave as such, because it would turn this meeting into an interaction between students and teachers, while we are here to share our thoughts and concerns with you, to think and reflect upon them with you, to debate and discuss the complexities and peculiarities of the situation with you.

In fact, this is just an invitation to incomprehension, and as Jalal Toufic says, a "subtle and intelligent incomprehension. For it is part of the mission of artists and intellectuals to produce works that show their subtle and intelligent incomprehension".

– 6 –
Delayed introduction

Your question on curating made me discover the extent to which I play the part of the innocent bystander. I realized that I know very little about the subject; my knowledge about curators comes from my role as an artist, and the artist/curator relationship. As for what happens before and after, it seems to me that artists do not attempt to understand how these aspects function. As if it is not our concern. For example, how do curators go about securing funds? And what is required from them in return? On what basis do the sponsors agree? On what basis do the curators agree? And once the money is spent and we take our fee, what do they have to prove to their sponsors? How do agendas function? What is the reason for focusing on one region of the world rather than another, on one topic rather than another? Why do we get invited one day, and forgotten about the next? How do these things work? What plays the bigger part: politics, ideologies, culture, propaganda, market strategies, or all of these at once? And who has the biggest influence? Curators or sponsors? There is a multitude of questions on this subject, and on the conflict of authorities between curators and the money-holders on one hand, and curators and the artists on the other. It seems to me that curators stand on shaky ground, caught between power and art. There are indeed many questions, and the only thing I can say now is that I am ignorant about at least two-thirds of the subject. What I do know is that the artist should know, and needs to learn more, be implicated and responsible, and leave this pretentious innocence behind.

E-Mail to a Curator

An introduction to "The Curators' Piece"

Tea Tupajić & Petra Zanki

Translated from the Croatian by Una Bauer

Zagreb, 10 June 2009

Dear Sven Åge Birkeland,

A few days ago we sent you an e-mail with the initial proposal for *The Curators' Piece* which we briefly discussed in Goldegg last month. As you noticed correctly, the project is weirdly constructed, but also very cool. We are happy that you are interested in it. This time we are writing to you to further clarify our motives and actions. Therefore, we will try to be as precise as possible, knowing that an e-mail is not the best medium for detailed explanations (especially since we know that curators receive hundreds of e-mails like this from artists).

The Curators' Piece is a project we are developing with chosen performing arts curators in order to present it at their festivals or venues in the form of a stage show. The curator takes part in the performance as a performer. Relying on the relations between the artists, the curators and the audience, the project deals with the production of contemporary performing arts and the possibility of art's influence on today's society. We conceive it as a challenge to the art. *Why art? What is it today? How does it get produced? Who are the artists? Who are the curators? Who is the audience? What can art do and what is the role of the artist, the curator and the audience in it?* These are the key questions out of which the fictional material of the performance is composed. We invite curators we feel are relevant for the shaping of today's landscape of contemporary performing arts. We invite them by e-mail (the way we are inviting you just now). The project consists of the research phase and production phase. After the initial e-mail, and if the curator is interested in the project, we enter into the research phase. The work in the research phase is individual, with one curator at a time. We use this phase to prepare the performance

– and – timewise, we are planning on finishing the research phase by the end of 2010. In the research phase, we visit the curator at his or her place of work, or we follow him or her on a business trip. By getting information on his or her work, we are also getting to know the context he is engaged with. We use the research phase to articulate the materials that are the starting point for work on the performance.

The production phase and the premiere are planned for 2011. The production process is developed through weekend residencies, starting in PS122 in New York and finishing in o espaco do tempo, Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal where we meet and work with the chosen curators. In this phase, the main aim is to find the right strategies for the performance and to establish a relationship between the audiences, curators-performers and us. The invited curators are also the co-producers of the show. Five to seven curators perform in the piece. It will premiere and be shown at their festivals and in their production houses.

Other organizations and festivals wishing to support the project could be involved too, but there is enough time to talk about those possibilities later.

We would now like to answer a couple of questions that you asked in your previous e-mail. The first and the key question: *Why curators?*

While the artist and the audience have found their place in the recent discourse and practice of performing arts, the curator has been left behind, and his work, although very important, has remained invisible. Other than a few articles, there is no publication on the work of the curator in the performing arts. This seems unbelievable, especially knowing that it is impossible to talk about the production of the arts today without taking into account its key figures.

In that sense, we are also wondering, just like you, how is it possible that proposals and invitations for collaboration on artistic projects never come from an artist, but always from a curator, and we, as you, don't know the answer. One of the aims of this project is to make that transparent.

You asked: *How did you select the curators?* On the one side, there is the curator's engagement and interest in contemporary art. What is also important for us is the curator's visibility and long-term presence on the scene. There is also the influence of his or her work in the field of performing arts. Additionally, it is quite relevant where the curator comes from – since if he or she is working in the context of developed economies (Western Europe and North America), he or she is shaping the cutting-edge scene and influencing other scenes in the world more than others. The courage of the curator to take part in this project with its different possible solutions rather than the usual procedures of selection and production of an artistic work is crucial. In the end, we try to choose curators whose programs correspond to our own artistic interest and who closely collaborate with artists.

You were recommended to us by many people because of your dedication and long-term vision in creating BIT Teatergarasjen and because you ensured its influence on the performing arts in the Nordic region and in Europe.

The other curators who join the project will be mentioned on our web page. Here is the link: www.curatorspiece.net. We plan on publishing the materials from the research phase of the project there. What we need for the beginning is your short CV and three photographs that you think best represent you.

Your question: *Is it by chance that the project is initiated by two young female artists from the Balkans, penetrating the Western European market and suggesting such a radical concept? Is that also a part of the project?* surprised us. We hadn't thought about that. It is interesting that the perception of the curator and that of the artist differ. It might also be true, as you said, that a male artist would construct the project differently. We tried to imagine what it would look like... Of course, emphasizing these details opens up the possibility for the promotion of *The Curators' Piece* – but also puts the project in great danger. These labels might help short-term, but are also disadvantageous for us (a young unknown artist is hardly an advantage for a renowned festival and any curator to accept the project).

Another question, one that Christine Peters already asked in one of her e-mails, and that you touched upon too is: *What is your artistic motivation? Why now? What is at stake?* In order to answer these questions we need to delve deeper, because the key to our motivation is in the question: *Why do we make art today?*

We can't be oblivious to the fact that art production isn't happening in a vacuum, separated from the concrete economic and political situation. Art production is a production like any other. Still, there is a reason why we still decide to make art today. Basically, unlike any other production field, art has the possibility to reflect its own production and the relations that were set up by it. That ability for self-reflection opens a path to many inversions and for possibilities of reconfiguration.

What we are interested in is to find a way in which theatre today can be political. When we are talking about our interest in the political, we are talking about our interest in the phenomenon of labour, its premises, shapes, and, most of all: its consequences. The labour that we are interested in is primarily our own labour in the field of art. With this project we open up the possibilities for an action in our own 'factory'. *The Curators' Piece* re-directs the focus to the very production of the artistic work, opens up a field for new thoughts and ways of perceiving performing arts.

We have now really departed from the concrete proposal, which is the invitation for the research phase of the project. Please find more about it in the attachment. We are hoping that you will be just as interested as you were in our initial conversation.

We are looking forward to the possibility of further collaboration and our work on the performance.

Cheers!
Petra and Tea

Attachment:
The preparation phase of "The Curators' Piece"

In order to define the role of the curator in *The Curators' Piece*, we first need to introduce ourselves and get to know the specific curator involved in the project.

Therefore we propose an initial "zero" phase of work, which is the preliminary, preparatory phase of the project, necessary for entering the later, production phase.

In the research phase, we will deal with the role of the curator in the production of performing arts and his responsibility and influence on what art today can or cannot offer to society. We will be engaged with the constitutive segments of the curator's work: the moments of selection, decision-making, contextualizing and communication (e.g. with the artists, collaborators, employees, other curators, politicians, board, etc.). We will gain additional insight into the curator's job through a series of conversations with his or her collaborators, audience members, artists and critics.

We will follow the schedule of selected activities accompanied by conversations with the curators. These activities and talks will help us focus on some of the more specific topics around which the frame for the performance (the schedule written below could be filled along the way with additional activities we both find interesting to research) will be formed.

Moreover, during our stay, the curator will get to know us better, he or she will become familiar with our artistic procedures and will have a clearer picture on how we will structure the rehearsal and production phase (e.g. who the curators involved in the performance will be, what the topics will be, the duration and audience set-ups, how the stage set-up will look like and which stage activities of the final performance we intend to establish).

The date for the first meeting could be any week from January to June 2010 – preferably in May 2010.

Other than travel costs, per diems and accommodation for two artists in Bergen that we kindly ask the curator to cover for us, no other fees will be sought in this preparatory phase.

THE PREPARATION PHASE — DETAILED SCHEDULE

SUNDAY	DAY ONE	Arrival in the afternoon. Meeting with the curator in an informal atmosphere. The curator provides us with a detailed list of things he did the day before – the task has been sent to the curator by e-mail the day before our arrival. Not recorded.
MONDAY	DAY TWO	Morning: (3 hrs.) Meeting with the curator in his working space: documented series of talks on art-related subjects translated into video and audio recordings. Quiet room required (e.g. space for team meetings or breaks).
TUESDAY	DAY THREE	Morning: (2 hrs.) Meeting the curator in his working space: on choice, selection & contextualization – video & audio recordings of selected games and tasks. Quiet room required (e.g. space for team meetings or breaks). Afternoon: (1 hr). Meeting with the curator in an informal space (bar, café, etc.): series of talks on life-related subjects translated into audio recordings, images and writings.
WEDNESDAY	DAY FOUR	(3 hrs.) Individual interviews with collaborators (private room required): audio recordings. (1 hr.) Meeting with the spectator of BIT Teatergarasjen: audio recording. Evening: Viewing performance of curator's choice. (optional) After the performance, discussion with the curator on the choice of the performance and the performance itself.
THURSDAY	DAY FIVE	(2 hrs.) Talk with the curator: getting to know his work in a historical perspective, including his present and future work. Becoming familiar with his projects, manifestations and events he has organized before his involvement with his current curatorial position. (1 hr.) Office tour: Getting to know the place where the curator works and the structures that the curator collaborates with – the city, the state and within Europe (by getting information from the curator). Getting to know the board involved in the decision-making. Getting to know the projects, manifestations and events the curator organizes at the place of his actual responsibility and plans for the near future. An evening with the curator: Viewing performance of curator's choice. (optional). After the performance, discussion with the curator on the choice of the performance and the performance itself.
FRIDAY	DAY SIX	(2 hrs.) Inversion of the situation – the curator has the opportunity to ask us private & project related questions. This session is video and audio recorded. Quiet space required. (2 hrs.) Meeting the artists of BIT –Teatergarasjen: video recording in a theatre space or studio.
SATURDAY	DAY SEVEN	Morning: (artists alone): Conceptualization of the basis for the performance. Discussing the concept & the frames for the structure of the production phase. Afternoon: (2 hrs.) Talk with the curator – evaluation of the last week. Presenting the idea with concrete stage frame, dates & costs. Scheduling the next meeting. Evening: Last dinner in an informal atmosphere. Not recorded.
SUNDAY	DAY EIGHT	Departure.

Trappers Creek,
Alaska





Curators'

Artist-Curator

My artistic and curatorial works clearly affect each other. If I ask myself why I do what I do, how I do it and for what, I also ask the spectator why they come, for what, who they are, what do they want, what they like and why they like it.

These questions can be formulised within a piece or a project but only a context can canalise all this information, energy and repercussions. I am interested in transferring from my artistic practices to the curatorial ones – experimentation, new modes of relations, visualization of the process and production, discourse in progress, criticism, flexibility, humour, joy of working, politic evolvement, generosity, curiosity...

When I started to curate, I thought about so many interesting projects, initiatives, pieces, artists that together could transform what didn't work in the performing arts scene. That there was an institution that supported my initiative gave us the opportunity to end many years of emptiness, to stop making claims and to present us as a reality. When I say us I am talking about many artists who cannot be classified within the institutions or conventional market because these agencies are too big and not flexible enough. If we do nothing, the market will always condition the products, and it is sad to think that many projects can only exist in the form of a 60-square metre piece which is made in two or three months. Simply boring!

Since I organise In-Presentable, I see a lot of artists collaborating in Madrid, sharing methodologies and practices and working hard together. I also see a discourse and criticism shared. As a curator you can build a context where everybody can use their knowledge and share it towards experiencing new situations. Situations that we build together because we want to, not because they are the only option.

We need to know more, be more conscious, have more experience, more emotions, more intensity, more of everything. When I initiate or share a project I like to feel that we want to work, that we know why we are opening new places, why we are getting overexcited and to say again; let's fucking do it! Even if we don't know yet what we have to do.

***Juan Domínguez** is a performer and choreographer. Since 2003 he is artistic director of the festival In-Presentable/La Casa Encendida in Madrid.*

Audience

When I think of an audience, I think of them as I have during my career as a theatre artist. At times they are my friends. At times they are colleagues. But most often, they are anonymous – out there in the darkness in the auditorium. Do I feel obliged to consider them as part of the equation, part of what I do in my practice as a curator? Yes.

I see the act of curation as a conversation. It can take many forms, but ultimately, it must be a true and legitimate conversation. I need to consider the audience as someone I wish to speak *to*, and perhaps more importantly, *with*. To do that, I also need to

Glossary

listen to them. I need to consider the reception and impact of the programming. I must never assume that they will, or should, accept and applaud everything we choose to program.

In North America the relationship to audiences is at the forefront of anything one undertakes as a curator in the performing arts. Festivals such as PuSh operate within a private/public funding context where the size of one's audience is a key "measurable" of success, box office revenue is a significant factor of survival. Is this pressure soul-destroying? I would cease to be a curator if I didn't believe there was a possible dialectic between work that is readily accessible, with work that challenges an audience's expectations – their worldview. PuSh was born out a belief that we could build a new audience for contemporary performing arts in Vancouver by encouraging existing isolated audiences to experience work that they would have previously had no interest in.

This relationship between audience and curation is not frozen in time. It is dynamic, always changing and evolving. There is shared history, a sense of give and take. This dynamic, along with the various outreach and educational efforts of post-performance talkbacks, artist talks, curatorial statements and the like, is extremely important; it can play a key role in an audience's reception of a work that is particularly demanding.

Is there a work that we simply can't consider? Certainly. The perils of audience risk are as tangible a reality as financial risk. Yet, the relationship between a curator and an audience is never wholly subservient, nor dictatorial. The operative word is "respect." To respect an audience is to demand their attention, to challenge them, but to also ask of their openness. My role as a curator is to create context, to provide opportunities for audiences to appreciate the impulses from which the work was created. Ultimately, an audience member may wish to choose to dismiss a work, but if they have no respect for PuSh having chosen it, then I have not done my job.

Norman Armour *is an actor, director, producer and interdisciplinary artist. He is the executive director of the international performing arts festival PuSH in Vancouver, Canada.*

Bearing Up

What does it mean to be a curator in Central Europe these days? Why do our choices differ so much from the others? Why do I seem less courageous than my Western European colleagues? We had a different history for forty years. We lived behind a wall that changed so much the meaning of life, the meaning of the 60s, the meaning of The Beatles' *White Album*, the meaning of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. We lived in a different history where the words, the art product possessed another comprehension.

I am more and more aware of the fact that I have a specific role and mission to work in Budapest, and my Central European colleagues are in a similar situation. I have to think and decide and represent alone, being a maverick in the context I work in.

A subjective short guide through the terminology of curating:
Danjel Andersson, **Norman Armour**, **Vincent Baudriller**, **Sven Åge Birkeland**, **Tom Bonte**, **Marie Collin**, **Lane Czaplinski**, **Sally De Kunst**, **Zvonimir Dobrović**, **Juan Domínguez**, **Silvia Fanti**, **Vallejo Gantner**, **Sigrid Gareis**, **Matthias von Hartz**, **Stefan Hilterhaus**, **Veronica Kaup-Hasler**, **Frie Leysen**, **Matthias Lilienthal**, **Nayse Lopez**, **Barbara Raes**, **Christophe Slagmuylder**, **György Szabó**, **Annemie Vanackere**, **Barbara Van Lindt** & **Gordana Vnuk**

I have to span the historical gap – that gets even larger through the distance from the big art capitals with their complex, financially strong institutional structures and progressive profiles. The pace of art is much faster in London, Paris and New York; other cities cannot keep up with this rhythm of presentation in quality and quantity. We don't have this broad international mass of spectators, this crowd of consumers that is well-educated and eager to follow the new trends. Our audience is much more segmented and it is much smaller. This deprives us from opening a bold dialogue with cutting edge, avant-garde trends.

For example: In the last five years I made several attempts to present recent tendencies in contemporary dance. But, neither the public nor the critics were even willing to try to comprehend the new aesthetics. Where does this resistance come from? My answer is simple: Whatever kind of work is successful becomes the fashion immediately. I have experienced so far that this unsatisfying state of aesthetic norms and fashions hinders the openness of the perception of new works.

It is our obligation to defy our underprivileged circumstances. We cannot give up acting locally. Artists and curators cannot exist without an audience, since our work depends on public resources. However, if we want to stay close to the tendencies of the world, we have to raise money and fight for the strong political and professional support that we miss so often: political and professional provincialism is the largest threat to our efforts. But we still remember the joyful periods when history provided opportunities and we felt the fresh wind of the new time. At the end of the 80s we were very close to the world. And I hope we will soon be again.

György Szabó *is managing director of Trafó, an interdisciplinary venue for contemporary art in Budapest.*

Choice

1. How is it made

Curating a festival is about making choices and defining a palette. Every selected project must find a sort of relevance inside of this palette.

To be able to make these choices we first have to define a general line. I defend a frame that is rather open and flexible. No theme or strong conceptual lines in advance. They will occur during the selection-process, by listening to the proposals of the artists, to their thoughts, dreams, desires and visions.

The first choices are made well in advance since I am curating a festival which produces and coproduces a lot of new works. First come mainly the creations that we discuss with artists we know from before. We have often already collaborated with them; we have trust in the potentiality of their practice. Without already knowing what the next festival will look like, only by being convinced by the project itself. These first choices form a kind of spine for the whole program.

The second phase can be compared to a puzzle. While the first pieces are loosely and randomly assembled, the pieces that still have to come must fit into the puzzle and give it a structure. By assembling the first choices we start to see possible images emerging. Some lines or frames appear and make the choices around the "spine" more oriented, influenced and balanced.

Let's be more concrete. How do we make these choices? At the beginning I can be quite open, I can use very different kinds of venues in the city, theatres or public squares, black boxes or white cubes. I have, in theory, no limitations concerning the format of the work, the discipline, the level of recognition of the artists. But then we have to reduce and make the theory correspond to practical aspects: financial, social, technical, logistical.

The main decision is already what we are going to see, where we will travel: going to unknown places and also attending places of reference. Trying artists we've never heard of

before and following the work of important figures. And then I have to like it, love it, be convinced by it; I will have to defend it. But on the other hand, there is the context where I will present it. It has to function within a corpus of other works and it must be relevant for the people who will see it. I will have to share it, to share my enthusiasm and convictions with others, many others, many different others.

2. What does it mean
Talking about relevance, the question is: relevant to what? These choices are definitely not a portrait of me, or what I consider to be interesting, contemporary and representative. They are capable of defining, to me and to some extent to many different others, the point where we are today, a certain Zeitgeist which can be perceived and intuitively understood by the individuals I try to convince to encounter the work presented.

Christophe Slagmuylder *joined the Kunstenfestivaldesarts (KFDA) staff in 2002 and worked on the festival programming with the artistic director Frie Leysen. Since 2006 he is the festival's artistic director.*

Compromise

Of course: our work, as producer, is to let the vision of an artist become true and to keep compromises as far away as possible. But in the end the work has to become reality and this reality might also bring confrontations with the budget or social laws for example. So we also have to negotiate solutions. And which compromise might be acceptable for the artist.

Avignon is not just a festival. In France it plays a highly symbolic role as a historical place but also as a place that is supposed to preserve a certain idea of culture. The Palais du Papes is for sure the most charged theatre place in France – and it fits an audience of 2000 people. To invite artists like Romeo Castellucci or Christoph Marthaler to create works here was a big challenge, since for most people the shows in the palace equal the whole festival. They don't see any others and most of them want a different kind of theatre: text theatre, classical theatre, repertory theatre… For me it was very important from the beginning that the palace be a place for creation and artistic adventure. Because here you can challenge and perhaps change the mind of a broader audience – and of politicians. On the other hand, an artist has to understand what it means to work here in terms of symbolic and political implications, but also in terms of the size of the audience.

So we had our share of scandals, of attacks by politics: for example, *Woyzeck* by Thomas Ostermeier was the first play in a foreign language in the palace. And that in German! Or Jan Fabre with explicit nudity in a Catholic college…. But only when it comes to public space do I need the agreement of the mayor, such as with an installation in 2004 when Julian Rosefeldt wanted to install the question "Ça va durer longtemps? (This will last for a long time?)" in big letters on the palace during the mass artists' strike. The mayor was afraid it could be read as a critique of the Catholic Church. In the end we were allowed to use the sentence without the question mark – which I consider even stronger.

Compared to visual arts, compromises are inherent in the performing arts: they are much more part of the social and economic realities; they involve more people and infrastructure; they are more difficult to manoeuvre.

As much as I fight for more artistic freedom and for less compromise, I am also responsible for the image of the festival, for its future. And not only in France – the political and economical situation is getting worse – accompanied by more and more populism. The fight for less compromise will not become easier.

From a conversation with ***Vincent Baudriller****, director of the Festival d'Avignon since 2004.*

Development

And one day that tumultuous need is simply there: Get out! Take the plunge! It is a yearning for being held back, for non-development, for coming to a standstill … (Robert Musil)

Space for development has long since become a constant in the well-oiled event machinery. No festival or hardly any venue today is without its think tanks, residencies and symposium programmes. Rules, topics, exhibitions guarantee future-proof processes. They follow social expectations and shift current issues into the focus of public interest. But how can the promise of chronologically traceable developments be combined with those entanglements, breaks, crashes, crises and grotesques that are inherent in art?

Where is the kairos, the dedication to that one supreme moment that plunges us into the unexpected? That moment which falls out of time and leads us to spaces created within the cracks, to spaces of speculation, indecision, ambiguity and uncertainty. Spaces that put their very sovereignty and purpose on the line. Spaces that don't want to know in advance. Spaces of reflection that expose their own motivations and invite you to lose yourself. Spaces that change in a process with their user, but still remain unchanged. Confident spaces which make the doctrines of reality real. Spaces of possibility rather than function. Spaces with their own definition of time. Effectively, spaces of development. Spaces that have the courage to accept the risk to lose all – just like art itself.

How can we forge a pathway towards finding, protecting or even creating these spaces? Has the time perhaps come for longer established relevant centres of development and presentation to fundamentally question their own operating mechanisms just as art itself continually does?

Who actually defines success? Which criteria for evaluation empower functional structures rather than artistic potentials? And what is the currency we calculate in?

If the resulting system is oriented almost exclusively towards media responses, audience numbers and the key discussion makers who position and then display themes, reputations and artists like trophies, then it is evident that new structures and spaces are called for that follow a different, unexpected and autonomous logic and, essentially, develop their own criteria for legitimation and new potentials.

Out with the old corset and logic of society's expectations; in with structures that allow art to be as intangible, as unexpected, as oppositional, as undeveloped, as unpredictable and as unrewarding as it needs to be to unfold its inherent force. To work towards all this now, to maintain claim to it, could be reason enough to *Take the plunge!*

***Stefan Hilterhaus** worked as a boatbuilder, performer and choreographer before he became the artistic director of Tanzlandschaft Ruhr in 1998 and of PACT Zollverein in 2002.*

Drive

I've had my share of threats and gossip. There have been periods when my friends avoided me like the plague. On several occasions, politicians, the press and television demanded that the theatre be shut down. Of course, it's always the same stuff provoking these reactions; sex, politics and religion. However all the noise and struggle comes hand in hand with a stream of warmth from a wide range of people, and brave artists with sometimes brilliant artistic achievements, life goes on like this. Art is worth bleeding for.

My project as a curator – on the one hand, well planned artistic work and strategic moves, while on the other hand, noisy, chaotic and unexpected events as exciting side effects – is after all a humanistic project. It's not really about art. Our

contribution from this rather marginal field of society, sometimes small, naive and inexperienced, but certainly always with an edge, can change lives. We, living and acting today, can't afford to walk in others' footsteps. Our duty is to dare, search for new material, original perspectives and adventurous knowledge, and we aim to address these basic parameters on a daily basis. I really like curators who combine knowledge and skills with a strong personal touch and approach, who stride beyond the trodden path. Within such a practice, the artist needs to supply knowledge, attitude, an exciting artistic idea, ability to deliver and a budget. We are after all talking about collaboration and respect that goes both ways.

My responsibility as a curator isn't towards transitional politicians, structures, power-games or glamour; my focus is on the artist and the audience. I care about the artist because it's the artist who makes the world go round, and makes me tick. I care about the audience because it's a privilege to have one. That's why I work and act within an art discourse.

Walking to my office in the rain, I'm thinking why on earth Bergen? My answer is often its intimacy, its urge to be international, to create new material as well as maintain tradition, and my seasons are based on ongoing processes. I want to present a full 12 course meal starting with basic ingredients, in a process that allows luxuries to fall into place (tasty bombs, harmonious additions, time to breathe...). Life is short, and switching metaphor from food to football; I'll continue working as Zidane, not a Rooney nor a Materazzi.

Sven Åge Birkeland *is artistic director of BIT Teatergarasjen in Bergen, the dance biannual Oktoberdans and the theatre biannual Meteor.*

East

East as a geographical location, as an economic position, as an idea, as an artistic background and, finally, East as a destiny. I am trying to question those defining aspects of the East with the help of two festivals. Queer Zagreb is one: this is its eighth year, and it is still both aesthetically and politically relevant. The term 'queer' is a Western notion, where it is exclusively related to minority identities such as homosexuality and gender difference. However, once transplanted to the East, it gained a new meaning, both in terms of its content, and its practice. The space of social and political transition redefined it and redirected it towards an understanding which includes a distance from any set of norms, towards the area of the unknown, new, towards the personal, public and artistic experiment. During transitional times, culture concentrated on safeguarding positions, on institutions, and on representation and reproduction. When the notion of queer is introduced into a transitional cultural context and presented as a move away from the norm and from a standardized cultural practice, and once its meaning is widened according to the givens of a local and regional social context burdened with patriarchy, strict traditional values and other normativities, queer becomes an interesting safe space for a much wider circle of meanings than in the West.

I believe that this narrow Western understanding of queer is precisely the reason why Queer Zagreb is the only festival today with this program orientation in Europe, not because queer as art wouldn't be interesting to the West. This late arrival to the East enabled the idea of queer to become more contemporary and it is now the right time for it to be presented back to the West, in its wider meaning.

This claim brings us to my second curatorial project, the Perforations festival. Unlike with Queer Zagreb, East isn't its advantage. Perforations deals with the East

in a more direct way, because the whole festival is programmatically focused exclusively on the Balkan region. The aim of the festival is to compensate for the long term neglect of the most active art scene in the region – an independent and non-institutional scene which resulted in segmentation and dispersal, a certain closeness and weak visibility of that scene. In that context, Perforations seems like a self-understandable project, however its realization meets specific neuralgic points of the Eastern context – the non-existence of a proper infrastructure, the lack of communication between the institutions and the independent scene, the lack of funding, weak regional connections. My position of curator has always been marked by the creation of a new space that enables me to engage with programs – whether it is an opening of an extended space for 'queer', or connecting the institutions and organizations of the independent scene with the aim of creating a platform for collaboration as a part of Perforations. In other words, there is always something on the boil in the East – which I guess makes me a boiling hot curator.

TRANSLATION **UNA BAUER**

Zvonimir Dobrović *is artistic director of the Queer Zagreb festival in Zagreb and the Perforacije/Perforations festival (Zagreb, Rijeka, Dubrovnik).*

Education

The programmer has become a key figure within the professionalized and institutionalized field of venues, art centres, festivals, production houses... You could aspire to become a programmer, you are already quite informed and thus... quite close to your goal.

How to become a performing arts curator? Some study theatre science, philosophy, arts history, literature, some have been theatre practitioners before; hardly anyone starts the job without experience in the field. Volunteering, being a bartender in a theatre foyer, working as a critic, technician, production assistant... allows one to gain insights into the needs of artists and audiences and generates an increased sensibility for the dynamics behind 'showing a performance'. This peripheral experience, which includes watching performances and how artistic directors and programmers do it, was – up until now – the only way to educate yourself. To learn that... (there are no) 50 ways to make a programme.

Let's say there are a couple of principles: the thematical, the geographical, the (multi) disciplinary, the artist-driven, the audience-driven, the context- or event-driven programming. A festival is different than a season; (co)producing demands other circumstances than presenting. And there is a whole range between the *shopper* and the *embedded* programmer.

Every artistic mission, every house, town or country is different and creates a very particular mix of artistic desires and prosaic parameters.

Anyone feel like setting up a Master of Performing Arts Programming?

You could organize some basic performing arts history courses, group dynamics workshops, invite professional fundraisers for a seminar and then? Let your students write concepts for festivals they cannot realize? Or send them as interns to festivals, theatres and venues?

In this case, I don't believe in education as simulation. This job is not about applying knowledge; it is about tuning in to all aspects of the reality you have to cope with. No art student at a Masters level ever simulates at the academy: he or she *makes* things. *Makes* mistakes.

The danger of setting up this kind of educational programme is that the job gets formatised, objectivised, pre-determined. A new generation of programmers, to paraphrase Heiner Goebbels, can decide to *stop* doing things.

We might agree though that programming practices can and must evolve. Examples: balancing more between profiling and servicing an artistic community. Exploring 50 ways to say no and why: a more transparent and explicit communication towards solicitating artists. Getting over the idea of exclusivity: it ties up artists and is very eco unfriendly.

In arts education, it is said students learn most from their peers. I agree. Developing the art of programming can only be done by an open exchange between colleagues. Anyone feel like setting up a new network, a new think tank, a working group, a dialogue series, an issue of a magazine? Anyone?

Barbara Van Lindt *founded the theatre laboratory Gasthuis in Amsterdam and was director of wp Zimmer. After working as a programmer for Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels, she became managing director of DasArts- Master of Theatre in Amsterdam.*

Euro-centrism

Euro-centrism is really this bizarre notion that the world pays a lot more attention to Europe than it really does. Of course the whole "this is what is hot in Paris now" idea has been there for ages, much before Levi-Strauss came and studied the Brazilian Indians for years apparently to better understand Rousseau (maybe I don't speak enough French, pardon). I was asked to write something personal on this notion (I suppose because I am not European, most of the time).

Euro-centrism, as a post-colonial dispositive (can we still use dispositive?) was key to understanding how dramaturgy canons and aesthetics that, well, colonized most of the world's stages, galleries and underground rehearsal spaces in the last century. Anyone knows the forces that push foreign ministry policies and money around international exchange programs and festivals all over the world. This is the awful truth for curators outside Europe: because of the travel money, European subsidized companies are cheap (for us). The less well-funded project you have in Latin America or Africa, the more European companies I see in it. Sometimes the work is also good.

Last week, in a meeting of the South American Network of Dance in Salvador, I heard that in Bolivia there is no more public money to non-indigenous forms of dance. Contemporary there means, apparently, Europe. But most European curators I speak to think Europe is dead and the new exciting artists come from the rest of the world, preferably with indigenous backgrounds. I guess nobody is ever happy. Money aside, of course the European festival circuit still legitimates certain logics and aesthetics. That is the real question and most pieces I have seen recently from Brazil, Latin America and Africa are repeating the dance that has been accepted in Europe in the last decade. But some of them do that brilliantly. And my European colleagues don't have a different story to tell.

Can we program a really honest (can we still use honest?) festival when we have to deal with the big picture of post-colonial reassessment? Is it so different to make an independent, multi-layered international festival outside Europe? Is it euro-centric for an international curator to go to Europe to look for good work? Is it okay for German audiences to enjoy a very bad dance piece made on some distant island by native dancers? Is it okay to see well-funded western European dancers making a studio piece that will only be seen by their friends? I really don't recognize what I do in curators who have no interest in whatever is out of reach by a TGV, but neither in the ones who do festivals called "Focus France" in some African city.

I have no answers, just a growing bitter taste. I keep remembering a line from the Brazilian/North-American theatre maker Ricky Seabra in his solo *Empire – love to love you baby*, explaining his double citizenship

situation and why he will be trashing the US that evening: "From now on, when I say we, I mean the rest of the world".

Nayse Lopez *is a journalist and dance critic. Since 2005 she is artistic director, alongside Eduardo Bonito, of the Panorama Festival in Rio de Janeiro. She is also general editor of the dance and performance portal www.idanca.net.*

Far Out

"The west is the best, get here and we'll do the rest." – The Doors

People often ask me about being a performance curator in such a far off place as Seattle, Washington. "You must feel isolated," they all say.

Isolated from what? Europe? The internet and air travel allows me to copy, I mean, study the programming at the Kunsten-festival des Arts and Avignon, and many of the artists here in town can dance standing still with the best non-danseurs in France.

Isolated from New York? Gotham is all about designer pizza with poached eggs and lemongrass popsicles; performance art there is mostly a relic of the 60's and 70's, and is more likely to occur at MoMA or the Guggenheim than downtown.

The Northwest has been a cultural hotbed for quite awhile, boasting residents like Merce, Kurt, Jimi and Gus at one point or another. Interstate 5 forms a creative corridor in the region, connecting Seattle to Vancouver, B.C. and Portland by short 3 hour car drives. As a result, many artists travel between the cities with increasing frequency to perform in front of different audiences while also travelling to see the work of others. This makes for a robust community of performance practitioners who can get a little surly when a visiting curator or fellow artist says something like, "I love how courageous you are, living out here on your own terms without caring about what's happening in the art world."

The artists here – and the audiences, too – are very much aware of a larger international performance scene and what they want from programmers is help gaining regular access to it without any curatorial heavy-handedness. They want to experience works by artists who are being seen and discussed in Berlin or Tokyo, and they have a hunger for the kind of progressive aesthetics that are difficult to present at most venues in the U.S.

Seattleites also get that while we may be isolated geographically, we're no more so than anyone else. Even as people around the world can view performances online and at movie theatres (i.e. OntheBoards.tv and Metropolitan Opera simulcasts), contemporary performance still exists on the fringe of modern society, appealing mostly to small niche audiences who respond to new ideas and forms of expression. Overall, it's still a far out enterprise no matter where you live.

Lane Czaplinski *is artistic director of On the Boards (OtB) – The Behnke Center for Contemporary Performance in Seattle.*

Freelancer / Employee

Free-lance curatorship or permanent employment at an institution? Answering that question is about as hard as the one after "single or in a relationship". Both depend on personal temperament and spirit, on the specific circumstances of one's existence, but also on the stage in one's life.

Both may be equally interesting, but there are significant differences: A free-lance curator has to account for and prove the relevance of a theme or content to an institution, politician or sponsor, which often is a tedious process. If the curator succeeds, she/he at best is granted the privilege to work very closely on the content: the conception of programmes, dialogue with the artists, texts, presentation and public relations. In principle, a permanently

employed programmer also is allowed to do so, but she/he has to keep an eye on other, often disagreeable things: quotas, box office, sponsors, legal questions regarding employment and the stage, politics, the institution's reputation, various campaigns, and so on. An artistic director or manager of an institution easily spends 80% of the day on non-artistic questions, leaving her/him 20% of her/his time for the development of content. That's when she/he curses her/his job and starts to dream about becoming a free-lance curator. Or to be able to change places with her/his dramaturge …

Therefore, working as a free-lance curator is the way of choice for every "content player": it will never make you rich, as Harald Szeemann already pointed out, but it does promise a high degree of personal fulfilment. There's one disadvantage though; you may be able to make an impact, be it through the development of formats, by promoting artists or by pinpointing artistic questions … But you will have limited success with changing landscapes or structures. As a rule, you need an institution to do so. Because of its foothold in the political community, its heaviness and persistence it is mostly the institution which secures an idea's visibility, implementation and lastingness. Institutions rarely happen to be sexy, but they are an important means to an end.

TRANSLATION **DAVID ENDER**

Sigrid Gareis *works as a curator in the field of theatre and dance. From 1992-2000 she developed the department for theatre/dance for the Siemens Arts Program, from 2000-2009 she was founding director of Tanzquartier Wien.*

Friendship

In order to participate in this glossary of terms, there were some choices to be made:

— Choosing a definition for friendship (oh, help)
— Choosing a definition for curatorship (once more: oh, help)
— Choosing an example out of my personal situation (easy)
— Choosing a moment to write*
— Trying to make sense by relating those choices; thinking a guideline for this might exist; quickly realising there is no…

START:
In ancient times the word 'amicitia' had a very functional and economical meaning. It was a strategic and tactic tool for the aristocracy to obtain political or economical goals. Between 'amici' there was a reciprocal relationship in which obligations, expectations and efforts were always a big part of the deal. Today in the field of arts friendships, on the contrary, are mostly built on an economy of trust and belief between artists and curators; between curators and audiences; between curators and curators. Statistically these economics make the possibility of established friendships (not between 'functions' but between 'individuals') very high.

To find a strict definition for this particular kind of friendship is very unsatisfactory. The relationship is very Yin and Yang between empathy and non-criticality; between authenticity and corruptibility; between fascinated pleasure and cold evaluation. Friendship makes the work together stronger, but also more complicated: *Am I liking this work because I like this person or am I very critical to this work because I like this person?* Luckily the critical discourse helps to erase all conjugations of the verb 'to like' in the performing arts field! (We abandoned that one to the facebookworld!)**

Barbara Raes *was dance programmer of the arts centre Vooruit in Ghent, Belgium from 2000-2007. Since 2007 she is the artistic director of the arts centre BUDA in Kortrijk, Belgium.*

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* (it was midnight after Edit Kaldor's: *C'est du Chinois*)

** On the 15th of May 2010 according to Facebook I have 815 friends, of which 477 are artists. I could wonder if that's a good or bad thing, but actually I prefer to fold napkins into funny structures and dream of the day that the happy conceptualist asks the wonderful grand jeté 'will we become friends?' (and the other way around).

Interdisciplinarity

In the last 40 years we have welcomed trans-disciplinarity, multi-disciplinarity, inter-diciplinarity, in-disciplinarity, and probably today extra-disciplinarity, a sort of free-style. Many innovations blurred expressive boundaries: crossovers, infiltrations of new-media, electronic arts, relational art, public arts, revival of the performance…

Interdisciplinarity is already there. Contemporary languages organically involve the idea of intersection and fusion of knowledge and expressivity, with any distinction and a non-hierarchical horizontality between means of expression and communication.

Interdisciplinarity could be seen in terms of 'performing competences'. From the extreme of rather rigid interdepartmental collaborations – i.e. a visual artist in dialogue with a performer plus a musician or a film-maker – to a more informal exchange of knowledge, to the articulation within one artist's research with the aim of producing activity rather than objects. Formal solutions depend on the project itself, and are developed in the most adequate forms/platforms/languages.

To overcome the problem of taxonomy and disciplinarity it is of a great importance where and how to operate. Theatres, concert halls, cinemas, museums and other equipped structures/spaces are fixed dispositives that immediately ask for precise actions. They have a connotative power. Interdisciplinarity needs its own ground, sensitive fields in which the settings of arts blend with the space of life, versus places which are exhausted (socially, symbolically) and represent a status quo. So, on a curatorial level, displays should be the main point to focus on – strictly in connection with the art works and the artists' point of view, in order to 'perform the structures'.

If working in a structure always brings a series of existing normatives and pre-sets, a neutral terrain with no connotations could be disclosed as the ideal place for the interaction of different disciplinary competences. In destructured spaces the different experiences and knowledge collapse in a more creative and intensive way. Not-yet-formatted spaces permit a wide range of approaches and a certain mutability. Dispositives where it is possible to re-invent formats and relationships for a presentation that mainly would leave space for performance as behaviour and activities. In any language.

What interests me in curating is the effort of negotiating between 'normal' life flow and the 'artistic' intervention, pushing the curator and the other invited competences – artists and collaborators – at the crossroads between the possible and impossible, in a game of connections. De-insulating art.

Silvia Fanti *is the artistic director of the interdisciplinary Festival internazionale sullo Spettacolo Contemporaneo in Bologna, Italy.*

Internationality

A few years ago somebody said to me: Indonesia, there is really nothing going on there. And I thought: there are 120 million people living in Indonesia – and one Westerner says there is nothing happening? What kind of arrogance is that? So I went to see what was happening in Indonesia.

We still have a colonial attitude and we are still imperialists. We still have the feeling that Western culture is superior – we still don't see that others might be just as rich or even richer. In this regard, programming an international festival is for me mainly about changing our western perspective. To confront our point of view with the point of view of artists from Asia or Africa.

We can never fully read an artistic work from another culture – we should accept that. It is a good lesson in modesty. The problem is not that we do not fully understand, the problem is when we think we do. Not to easily bridge the differences is also a sign of respect.

That also means that some works cannot easily be transported into other contexts. You don't have to understand it all, but you have to be able to relate to it in some way. I once saw a piece by Bulgakov in Moscow – it was at the beginning of Perestroika and the first time it was staged again – and I was carried away by the amazing electricity in the audience. When it arrived at Kunstenfestival it was just some mediocre Russian production. The highly politicised context could not be felt in Brussels.

On the other hand, it happens that artists produce work which they think can be successful in Europe – since that's where the money is. Prostitution exists all over the world, also in the arts. So what you get is a nice exotic cocktail with a bit of Asian tradition nicely wrapped with a touch of contemporary flavour – and it works: the West loves it.

In the same way we love war, we love poverty and misery. A Lebanese artist told me recently: I am fed up with being considered a war artist, I am just an artist! But we love to see Palestinians with dynamite around their waists, oppressed Chinese, beautiful African dancing bodies and veiled Arab women. We want to confirm our clichés – it secures our way of thinking. But not only does it give the wrong view, it is also very disrespectful to the local cultures and their important differences.

Of course it takes two to tango: There are also enough curators that don't see that or think this is indeed what their audiences want. But it is not just about buying a project; it is about investing time to develop a relationship with an artist, to understand his or her vision and the urgency of his or her work. It takes time, but as a curator, this is our job.

You can make a festival behind your desk – but internationality is a decision. It takes a lot of time, it takes some money, and it takes a lot of energy and frustration. Some colleagues say that international work is not necessary anymore since everybody knows the world via CNN and the internet – I don't agree at all. After all these years I still think there is not enough international circulation, and I still think that we as curators are not courageous enough. Despite all the information tools we have – we still don't know anything about the world.

From a conversation with ***Frie Leysen****. She founded the art centre De Singel in Antwerpen and in 1994 the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Bruxelles. In the last years her research is concentrated on the Arabic countries, where she curated the Festival Meeting Points 5 in eleven cities. She is the first international artistic director of the festival Theater der Welt.*

Labelling

The act of labelling can be performed on at least two occasions: when we are looking for money to realise a much wanted project; and when we find the money to realise the much wanted project, and finally announce its public appearance.

In the first case, the goal is clear: we label to convince a specific funder or institution with terms it is sensitive to (young and emerging, engaging and political, innovative or canonised, exclusive or broadly accessible). But whom do we address in the second case?

My first impulse is to say: the audience! We want to inform our audience in the best possible way. Which labels can win a potential spectator over? Classics are labels of genre (theatre/dance/music/visual theatre/interdisciplinary etc), status (work-in-progress, experimental, première) and place of origin. There might not even be such a big difference with the labels for the funding bodies. But apart from the seduction, the goal is also to create the right expectations and to push spectators softly in a specific direction.

Part of this however is related to … ourselves. Isn't it the highest achievement when a spectator buys a ticket because it is part of *my* programme? So the labelling serves two purposes: to give the right information *and* to create the right aura around the context:

my programme. Through the labels appears a curator who is adventurous, who cares for young artists and invests in them, who has a good antenna for quality. And the audience is invited to be a part of this.

And what about the infamous label 'première'? Isn't it more than the others addressed to a particular part of the audience, namely… ourselves? We, the curators, the theatre professionals, are after all spectators too. That we are also 'conculleagues' (colleagues-concurrents) becomes visible in the paradox of the P-word in all its variations (première, world première, pre-première, continental première, national première, specific language première, and how about 'Rotterdamse premiere'?): the première-thing is a strategy for survival for a curator and his organisation, because it stands for uniqueness, for the strong relations an artist has to this specific festival or theatre and in this regard it secures politically the working possibilities for many artists. But as the première claim blocks chances for artists to perform elsewhere, to define his own schedule we should always keep in mind that our primary audience is our local audience. And they doesn't really care whether a show has been presented before in a remote place. In the end, collaboration – being colleagues – will be more important than exclusivity – being concurrents.

Annemie Vanackere *became the theatre programmer and producer of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg in Rotterdam in 1995. As artistic director she is also responsible for the festival De Internationale Kreuze, and for the Productiehuis Rotterdam.*

Locality

I like my coffee with milk. In Fribourg (CH), this means I have to order a "renversé". Elsewhere I would ask for a latte macchiatto, a Milchkaffee, a café au lait or even simply a latte. But is a renversé really the same as a latte macchiato? Do you receive the perfect café au lait when you ask for a Milchkaffee? Drinking coffee can sometimes cause a miniature culture shock. Luckily. Because are we not all witnesses to a sneaking cultural homogenisation?

This however doesn't mean that I am bluntly pleading for a return to localisation. The result of globalisation is that the romantic idea of cultural origins or local roots has more or less lost every meaning. Authenticity doesn't refer to provenance any more, but rather to a successful arrival of a cultural practice in a new surrounding, ideally with its own, obstinate touch. It is in that sense that locality becomes interesting: to produce international artistic work that creates an interactive relationship with and questions a local context or to stimulate local artists to overcome the little box thinking by trying out new formats. To organise a contest with a leitmotiv that challenges artists and practitioners from other fields, and that offers a residency and mentoring to get to know the city and local society. To involve the local spectators in an active way, by inviting them to be performers or participants in an artistic project. To use other locations in the city and reach an audience of passers-by. To be actively involved in both local and wider-ranging artistic activities.

But also to keep convincing state authorities that 'local' art works can be produced by international artists and practitioners from other fields. To respect the reality of a small town, and care for both a critical audience of diehards who expects to be baffled year after year and a younger audience that discovers things for the first time.

In the best case an art festival in a small town in Switzerland doesn't have one profile. Rather it exists as a series of mini profiles: it focuses on every project, every artist, and preserves their artistic autonomy. After all, everyone likes their coffee in a different way. It's the actual art that defines the diversity of a festival and that also reveals the heterogeneous profile of its habitat.

__Sally De Kunst__ is artistic director of the Belluard Bollwerk International festival in Fribourg, Switzerland.

Money

Money is the oil in the joints of a creaky performance system. We obsess about it, complain of it, never have enough of it. We deny it, love it, hate it, embrace it, fear it. It makes OK things awful and can make the ambitious possible. It costs and buys us time. Its lack was a virtue, but is now a sin, while its abundance can be an even greater offence. Access to none can free us from limits, while even just a little of it can box us in.

For something all about seemingly very simple numbers, it's stunningly relative when we begin to count it in different ways: How big are our fees? How do locals fare compared to internationals? What is the per seat subsidy? What are our percentages of different kinds of revenue? Who should be paid? How much? What's the return on investment on that? Are we always running a deficit if we're funded by people who are giving money away (with no expectation of return)? Is that OK?

It's tricky stuff, money.

Here in NYC I fight internally with the idea that it will somehow solve our problems – of course it cannot, yet without the idea of a professional level of support for artists, the work struggles to improve. Money follows ideas – are the ideas inhibited or limited by their resources? Perhaps after decades of assuming no money they have become so.

Yet the other ideas that underpin the strength of NYC and the US continue to ferment and explode, spread and evolve. There is always a fear that it is the theatre itself, our own ideas or failures that are really the problem. Perhaps it is so. We cannot assume we automatically deserve a role in the social ecosystem we inhabit. But once earned, should it be automatically supported?

Then somehow at a certain point we just have to forget money; it needs to cease being a limit, but rather an enabler. Make it a tool to do what you want, not a problem to overcome. Find capital; use it well – for your artists, and for your audience. Simple – couldn't be easier.

Just gotta go find some.

__Vallejo Gantner__ has been the artistic director of Performance Space 122 (PS122) in New York since 2004. Prior to this, he was the director of the Dublin Fringe Festival and the artistic associate of the Melbourne Festival.

Networking

When a few of us sat in the garden of Villa Comunale di Polverigi in July, 1981 talking about our artistic affinities, we felt that a common European spirit, much before the creation of the European Union, was already at work uniting theatre professionals from different countries who shared the same theatre vision. A vision of a *new theatre* that in the now distant eighties stirred up Europe and initiated a number of bold impulses that had arrived from the fields of visual arts, technology and science, new media, dance and movement – also rejecting a prevailing logo-centric order of the time.

The idea which we were all enthusiastic about then was to create an opportunity to meet on a regular basis in order to exchange ideas and expertise, to find partners who advocate freedom of creation and willingness to take risks, the ones with whom we can share experiences and conceive projects. So IETM was born, today certainly the largest and most influential performing arts network in Europe.

The conversations continued in the following years. We talked about the tasks that stood before the curators, festival directors, producers, promoters, a new class of people working between artists and audiences who were growing in number and who were going to provide logistical support

by creating production, distribution and promotion structures for the emerging generation of theatre artists. Artists who at the time were profoundly changing the European theatre landscape. They were produced outside of the institutions and required specific production conditions to which we tried to respond.

The "boom" of festivals in the following years contributed to the creation of a theatre market that established the *new theatre* as the mainstream development and which soon set up globally imitated aesthetic parameters that spread from the independent structures to institutions eventually causing a uniformity of the European performing arts scene.

Today networking seems just a sophisticated way of saying "doing business" inside a group connected by common interests. As such, networks with their lucrative, market logic have an immense impact on the development of artistic expression but this issue is rarely discussed. It is not only about how to curate, to produce, to tour, but what is the work we are presenting, producing and touring. Little is said about that.

What artistic, political and social space do the theatre networks of today define as theirs? Are their members connected with any kind of vision or are the artistic visions an outdated concept for the majority of curators?

Gordana Vnuk *is the founder and artistic director of the Festival of New Theatre EUROKAZ in Zagreb since 1987. Previous positions include theatre programmer at the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff, Wales and artistic director of Kampnagel in Hamburg, Germany.*

New

I seldom use this difficult word, new, but people seem to hear it anyway. When I present work, it is about the Artist and the Art that she/he or they propose, and I, for some reason, find relevant to introduce to my context. The last time anyone used the word 'new' and it made sense to me was Michael Kirby in *The New Theatre* from 1966.

The concept of new is not only difficult in the postmodern sense of "nothing is new". It is also problematic in the historical sense. How long is something new? To whom is it new? To many fellow curators it seems important that they are the first to present something. This usually is a sort of colonization. "I presented them first in Europe", "…in Germany", or "…in German-speaking countries" and so on. It's a bit like the Spanish claiming they found America, the Vikings were there before them, and let's not forget the Indians (Native Americans) who lived there in the first place.

To me the context is the most important curatorial tool in the performing arts. Since it is not a plastic art it has to be shown to exist. So with this view everything not shown is new. I have felt the need with my festival Perfect Performance in Stockholm to present a lot of artists who have never performed in Sweden. Not because they are new but rather because they did not exist in the consciousness of the Swedish performing arts scene. One or two critics/colleagues have complained that this or that is not new. Yes and no. Depending on context. If the framework is the Swedish performing arts scene, then Romeo Castellucci was new, as was Forced Entertainment, Tg Stan, Richard Maxwell even Baktruppen. And so on.

The first international program I presented with more or less unestablished artists was this year's TUPP in Uppsala. After presenting mostly well-known names I now felt the scene was ready for "the new". (I contradict myself on purpose.) I wanted to make a program where the more established names like Laurie Anderson, with a long history of communicating and building an audience, was placed next to an artist who was just starting out, most of them are also not known to my colleagues, which I think also raised my stocks as a programmer. (Finding and presenting unknown continents is a seductive tool for the curator).

__Danjel Andersson__ started Perfect Performance, a hybrid organization in Stockholm that makes festivals, seminars, platforms. He is program director of the Annual Performing Arts festival TUPP in Uppsala and artistic director of Moderna Dansteatern in Stockholm.

Politics

The increasing commercialisation of nearly all spheres of society in the last years has created a new role for public arts institutions. They are part of the few remaining spaces which are not yet completely governed by capitalist logic. From this point of view a special critical perspective is possible – and I tend to say: necessary.

In these political circumstances I see the stage, the theatre, the festival not only as a place for artistic production and presentation but also as a very specific public space – well equipped to be a place for political reflection of society by aesthetic means. This of course changes the ratio of viewing as well as curating the performing arts. Artistic/performative quality becomes only one of the criteria while social and political relevance gain importance. The borders between the different art forms get nearly irrelevant and the relation between art and social practises gets more and more in focus. When you curate along political, philosophical or social ideas or themes, the quality of the project starts to come not only from the individual work but more and more from relations and interdependencies – between individual projects as well between art, social theory and political reality.

For the last three years as the director of the International Summer Festival Hamburg, I have focused on exploring the challenges of climate change with artists and scientists. It turns out that the contemporary artistic community has surprisingly little language to address ecological issues. Maybe the topic is at the same time too new and regarded as too old-fashioned. Maybe it still smells too much like a hippie-issue, in any case ecology is not fashionable in the arts.

Therefore providing a frame like the festival was a highly productive catalyst to enable artistic research and production. Several artists have embarked on journeys into ecological issues and their implications on society. In many cases the research starts or leads to social and scientific areas way beyond the usual realm of performing arts. Scientific approaches and methods might as well be necessary as a sensorium for social and political interaction which are not always to that extent part of the usual artistic way of working. After years of working on these verges I am deeply convinced that this is where the future lies – for the arts as well as for society.

__Matthias von Hartz__ worked as a theatre director before starting to curate political events in large theatres and museums. Since 2007 he is artistic co-director of Theaterfestival Impulse and artistic director of Internationales Sommerfestival Hamburg.

Power

The power to commission artists, the power to accept a project or to invite a production.

The power to make decisions that are important for the artists; a power that is at the same time agonising and exciting. It is easier when you invite an existing production – and much more complex when you are engaged in the project or when you commission a work. The reaching of a decision, the dialogue with the artist but also the dialogue with the partners, these are the key moments of our power. And *not* to choose something does not necessarily mean the work is not innovative, clever, committed enough – the festival has a certain style, works have to fit in.

To exercise this power is at the heart of this profession; once you say yes to a proposal or when artists accept yours, you need to persuade the partners, to find the right space and the financial support. The power of decision becomes the power of conviction.

But the doubt stays present just until the premiere. It is rare for a producer to be able to intervene efficiently in the process of a creation; rather we influence it by optimizing the working conditions. And if despite all this we realize during the rehearsals that the show is not fulfilling our expectations, we accept it and we present it. We never cancelled an announced production.

It is a power full of obligations.

It is a fragile power. Without enough positive response from the public or the press it is impossible to impose an artist. But we can continue to support him for 2 or 3 projects and hope that he will find his audience.

The power of obstinacy.

There are many examples of artists who succeeded after a difficult start; recently at the Festival d'Automne it was the case with Steven Cohen, Richard Maxwell or the composer Mark Andre. But also many others over the years: Merce Cunningham, Helmut Lachenmann or Richard Foreman at their beginnings.

In the end, it is a power that comprehends failure, a production cannot fulfil expectations; however, if we are convinced of the talent of an author, we can continue the collaboration… for quite a while!

It is with anxiety and fever that this power is exercised, intuition and reflection are essential, each decision being full of consequences for the artist but also for the backer.

Marie Collin *is artistic director of the Festival d'Automne in Paris since 1978. She was the director or the Nimes Theater and programmer for the theatre at the Georges Pompidou Center.*

Society

Berlin is a social democratic city that reacts strongly to particular subjects – our audience comes to see certain topics rather than artists. Conceptual approaches taken from dance are therefore having a hard time.

What I am interested in, for example, is when Rimini Protokoll acquires Daimler-Benz stocks as entry tickets for two hundred visitors, for their main meeting, and the whole thing quite suddenly turns into theatre, a bad performance. When it suddenly becomes clear that this world of finances, which is currently considered as the true reality, reveals itself as working with fictions. Therefore, I don't really like calling it Political Theatre, I prefer the term Social. It is also because such pieces are in their aesthetics and their content clearly different from the idea of Political Theatre that was current in the 1970s and 1980s.

For me, HAU is a place for dealing with social topics, conflicts, discourses. Perhaps Berlin has a positional advantage here, with its 250-thousand people coming from the university sector, but topics such as migration can also be discussed elsewhere – I believe that many festivals and theatres are just not trying hard enough. For me, for example, opening the theatre house directly towards the Kreuzberg quarter, with its dominant minority of Turkish origin, has been a part of our programme from the very outset. It took us some time to develop it; in the beginning, it was above all a great statement and a massive effort of making people involved in it – it was not the same as with other free groups, which tend to apply by themselves. We approached people and asked and begged. Up to the present day they haven't really come to claim the house for themselves – it remains something that one must give a push to, again and again. It is considered a great success if a performance has an audience that consists of up to one third immigrants – and then with the next production, that number will mercilessly fall back to three, four, or five percent. But this five percent, if we manage to preserve them, are still a great success.

For me, managing such a theatre house also has something to do with the desire of taking politically cultural positions. A place like HAU, which is smaller than a city theatre and has no permanent ensemble, can always be redefined – also as a place for making

politics. Even if the times when the theatre people were crucial in spreading opinions are long gone, one still tries to shout back at the opinion that management has fallen into the hands of a particular economic scene. In principle, it is like this: Whenever I see a taboo, I start itching. But I see myself here primarily as an organizer, someone who brings people together.

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*From a conversation with **Matthias Lilienthal**, artistic director of the Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) in Berlin since 2003. Before that he was the leading dramaturge at Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin, and artistic director of the Theater der Welt in Bonn, Düsseldorf, Köln und Duisburg in 2002.*

Sponsoring

1. Look for possible financial partners who have the ambition of placing themselves in the market as "innovative, research oriented, risky, daring and international" – the company searches for a high profile and a business-ethics which you can connect with.
2. Be prepared before meeting. Get all the information you can on the work and daily life of the other side. This shows a mutual interest, respect and understanding.
3. Never talk about your work first. This is the kind of egocentricity that turns the other side into a financial cow being called to get milked. And in consequence it turns the cultural worker into a beggar. It is imperative that – even when both sides know that the meeting will sooner or later be about money – both have the feeling of meeting on the same level. So first talk about the other, about the economy and the struggles the other has to face before smoothly introducing your work.
4. When talking about your work and the contemporary state of art never give the possible sponsor the feeling of being excluded. Try to mediate in a way that the other side has the feeling of being competent. Give simple examples, tell stories about the effects your work has on a local and international level. Make the other feel as having missed something in the past and give them the chance for future participation.
5. Never complain too much about your current financial problems. If necessary, try to tell how creative you are in inventing solutions… this is true and more funny for the other side.
6. Be honest. Admit you have nothing what can be sold on the first level. There is no money to make in what you do. Never say that a performance will reach a large number of people if it's not going to happen. Talk about other values instead – international fame and acceptance in a high profile community as well as in a local audience.
   So never cheat (beyond a certain extent). You have to know that despite the fact that the possible sponsor is working in a completely different context, your counterpart has a great instinct when not being taken seriously – otherwise they would not be where they are right now.
7. Make them laugh. This is one of the keys to open the others mind, heart (and purse). Most people are surrounded by quite stiff and boring people. They are happy when a formal business-lunch turns out to be exciting and inspiring.
8. Make them feel extremely comfortable and unique so they want reasons to see you more often.
9. Talk about concise steps to build the future together. Speak about money you need to fulfil your job and to realize your ideas. That's the time to get deep into financial support and long-term partnerships.
10. Once you have the support of sponsors, you have to work on to fulfil your promises; you have to work on this relation, be an extraordinary good host – otherwise you lose him forever.

***Veronica Kaup-Hasler** is director of steirischer herbst festival in Graz, Austria since 2006. In 2002 and 2004 she was artistic director of the Theaterformen festival in Hannover and Brunswick.*

Themes & Topics

"I'm sorry but your project proposal does not fit our festival theme". It sounds like a lousy but handy excuse for programmers. But there are other reasons to work with topics and themes than to overcome the arbitrariness of individual taste. For instance, you can make your marketeers very happy. Instead of having separate communication for all different kinds of projects and performances, just one theme has to be communicated, and performances can serve as examples of the 'bigger' concept. Test it, they will love it!

If you are one of those programmers who want to go beyond the needs of the marketing team, there are more good reasons to use themes or topics. For example: I am working in an art centre with a seasonal program. This program has no theme, no big idea. It is made up of some locally supported artists, some international ones, a crowd-pleaser from time to time and, of course, my personal preferences. A good and balanced season has dance and theatre, established and young work, work for the big venue and work for the small one etc… all formal criteria. So if I make a festival, I WANT to have a theme or topic to work with. If not, I would be doing exactly the same as what I am doing the whole year through…

In establishing the theme for a festival, I start from the projects I am interested in. Is there an aspect of the work they have in common? I don't work around a theme and then start selecting projects that fit into the concept. Themes follow artists. They come to being as a result of thorough 'concept kneading' together with the involved artists. I would rarely commission a work of art to fit the festival theme.

Does this mean that nothing can be instigated by a festival theme? Not at all. In a best case scenario the theme functions as a spark. It can bring up ideas from artists that fit the theme very well, but were not imposed by me.

The starting point of a festival program is always specific artistic projects – these will be the nucleus of the festival. Other projects will circle around it, throwing a different perspective on the topics. As a result, the theme is expanded, which is essential.

Another argument not to be too austere in selecting topics? In working with thematical festivals, the meaning of a work of art risks to be reduced to the context. The festival theme, when applied with strictness rather than with poetry, overpowers the artwork's topics. Artistic projects are not a mere illustration to the topic, they question it, stretch it, and – if you're lucky – they do implode it. It makes the festival as vulnerable and questionable as the projects it presents. This attitude of vulnerability makes the theme not a bodice, but a surprising context for both invited artists and the audience.

***Tom Bonte** is performing arts programmer in Vooruit Art Centre, Gent and the vice-president of the Dance Commission of the Flemish Government. In Vooruit he often works on themes and topics in festivals such as Almost Cinema and The Game is Up.*

The Curator as Mesostic and Asterisk

deufert&plischke

*after a premiere the curator who had invited us came to us in the company of the director of the city council for culture. The director had just started this job, before that he was at the tax office. The curator said that the performance was a heavy chunk, a real burden for her and her theatre. The director on the other hand smiled, stretched out his hand and congratulated us with the words: excellent work!

*a few weeks ago a curator called us and said: "I just read what the work that we will co-produce with you will be called. Finally a sexy title! I guess you will have audiences for once."

dan**C**e today
seems to be as**U**nnecessary as
all othe**R**
Arts so
That it needs
t**O** be taken
good ca**R**e of.

*after a performance the curator who had invited us asked us to go eat with her, as she had to tell us why she didn't like the performance at all. We went out and she ordered chicken that she started to eat with her fingers. Soon her mouth and fingers were shining from fat and tandoori sauce. It was difficult to listen to her comments, especially as we are vegetarians. She saw the performance again two days after in the company of another curator who wanted to invite the performance. Afterward she said that it was now excellent as we did the right changes. We hadn't changed a thing.

*once we were working with two great performers from Romania. When we arrived at the theatre the curator saw the performers. As the performers were rather skinny she asked us with a very concerned face: "Do they still have no food in Romania?" Every day she kept asking if they ate their breakfasts at the hotel.



*when we were traveling with our light designer to a French festival, he would also help us to arrange props and things on stage. He had quite long hair covered with a cap and he had a bit of a beard. Also his clothes were a bit dusty from unloading the truck. The curator came on stage and was furious as she thought he would be on stage with us. She kept repeating: ça va pas, ça va pas, ça va pas!

*curators seem to like Excel spreadsheets.

*knowing about the more experimental nature of our work it was a great surprise when we were invited to open a rather known dance festival. After the performance that was received with quite some skepticism we were asked to open the buffet. Again we were in an awkward situation, as everything contained some meat. We filled our plates with food and then handed them to friends. This act was later seen as a provocation. Since then there was no more communication with the festival.

a**C**knowledging the
Use of
Risk and
Affirmation
Towards an
unkn**O**wability of the
a**R**ts

*once we were teaching in a quite remote and rural area. The last day, the curator who had invited us wanted to come in order to pay us, pay in cash, which is very unusual. So just after the workshop she appeared, lifted her skirt and took a bundle of bank-notes that she carried in her garter.



we**C**laim that
yo**U**r position
the one of the cu**R**ator
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s**T**rong
intention t**O** organize
the uno**R**ganizable

dan**C**e needs to
actively **U**ndermine its
own **R**eduction and
self attr**A**ction to turn
into its own documen**T** by dreaming
the dream **O**f
ete**R**nity.

*once we were invited to an artistic residence program but we didn't get any information about the address, even after asking several times. As the pick up was arranged by the curator, we had no worry. Arriving at the airport no one was there to pick us up. So after waiting for quite some time we called the office but no one was there. So we called a colleague of the curator in another city and she told us to take a taxi and she gave us an address. As we arrived the curator was sitting with a friend in front of the house, quite surprised to see us. He had forgotten. So he had to arrange a place to stay for us and asked us to wait for an hour. After 6 hours he came to pick us up and drive us to the place. Arriving at the place he found out he had lost the key of the apartment and had to go get a new one from the owner. This took another few hours. The following two weeks we spent there were the best days we have had in years!

*when arriving to a festival north of the polar circle in the summer it was snowing and about 2° cold. We were dressed up like for winter, with boots, gloves and caps. To our astonishment the curator appeared in a t-shirt and flip-flops, as did the rest of the crew. Later the temperature rose to 20° and we took part in an absolutely fantastic festival. Coming home we told another curator about this fantastic festival and the great place it was happening at. So next year she went there. The program was bad and it was raining all week.

to take **C**are of the arts
means to **U**nderstand
the **R**isk
the **A**rtists
Take
t**O**gether with
the cu**R**ator

Notes on Contributors

Gabriele Brandstetter (Germany) is professor of Theatre and Dance Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focus is on: performance theories; concepts of body and movement in notation, image and performance, dance, theatricality and gender differences. Her publications include *Tanz-Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (1995), *ReMembering the Body. Körperbilder in Bewegung* (2000, co-ed.), *Erzählen und Wissen. Paradigmen und Aporien ihrer Inszenierungen in Goethes 'Wahlverwandschaften'* (2003, ed.), *Bild-Sprung. TanzTheaterBewegung im Wechsel der Medien* (2005), *Schwarm(E)Motion. Bewegung zwischen Affekt und Masse* (2007, co-ed.), *Tanz als Anthropologie* (2007, co-ed.), *Prognosen über Bewegungen* (2009, co-ed.).

The artistwin **deufert&plischke** lives and works in Berlin. Their video and performance work has been presented internationally since 2001. Together deufert&plischke created the performance trilogy *Directories* (2002-2006), *Inexhaustible* (2003), *As if (it was beautiful)* (2004), *Sofia SP / science is fiction* (2004), *Reportable Portraits* (2007), *Anarchiv#1: I am not a Zombie* (2009), and *Anarchiv#2: second hand* (2010). The artistwin teaches at various universities and art institutes in Europe and Latin America. In 2006 they were Visiting Professors at the University of Hamburg (Department of Performance Studies) and in 2008 at the University of Giessen (Institute of Applied Theatre Science). Since 2010 they are Professors at the BA Program *Dance, Context, Choreography* / HZT Berlin.

Tim Etchells (1962) is an artist and a writer based in the UK. He has worked in a wide variety of contexts, notably as the leader of the performance group Forced Entertainment. His work spans performance, video, photography, text projects, installation and fiction. His publications include his first novel *The Broken World* (2008) and the monograph on Forced Entertainment, *Certain Fragments* (1999). Etchells' visual art works were presented at solo shows at Gasworks and Sketch (London) and Künstlerhaus (Bremen); at the biennales Manifesta 7 (2008), Art Sheffield (2008) and Goteborg Bienale (2009); as well as in groups shows at the Netherlands Media Art Institute (Amsterdam), MUHKA (Antwerp), Sparwasser HQ (Berlin), MACBA (Barcelona), Kunsthaus Graz and many more. He is "Thinker in Residence" (2009-2010) at Tate Research and LADA in London.

Hugo Glendinning has been working as a photographer for twenty years. His output stretches across the cultural industries from fine art collaborations in video and photography, through production and performance documentation to portrait work. He has worked with most leading British theatre and dance companies and is regularly commissioned by The RSC, National Theatre, Royal Opera House and many West End theatre producers. He has published and exhibited work internationally, notably his continuing project of documentation and the investigation of performance photography with Forced Entertainment Theatre Company.

Hannah Hurtzig has headed the Mobile Academy (Mobile Akademie) since 1999, an art project with changing focal topics ranging between field research, course offerings, and actionism, opens up spaces for collective learning, production and other new formats of conveying knowledge. The Mobile Academy is stationed at the HAU (Hebbel am Ufer) in Berlin, but projects of the Academy are shown internationally, including TR Warschau 06, Tanzkongress Berlin (2006), Istanbul Biennale (2007), steirischer herbst, Graz (2007), Wiener Festwochen (2008), manifesta7 (2008), the bluecoat Liverpool (2008), Dubai / Abu Dhabi und Biennale di Venezia (2009), Israeli Center for Digital Art in Jaffa (2009) and Dresden (2010). From 1985 to 1990 she was the artistic director of Kampnagelfabrik in Hamburg.

Florian Malzacher is co-programmer of the festival steirischer herbst in Graz (since 2006) and also freelance dramaturge/curator for Burgtheater Vienna (since 2009). After his studies of Applied Theatre at the University of Giessen/Germany, he worked as a freelance theatre journalist and was a founding member of the independent curators' collective Unfriendly Takeover in Frankfurt. He has worked as a freelance dramaturge for Rimini Protokoll, Lola Arias, Nature Theater of Oklahoma. His books include *Not Even a Game Anymore – The Theatre of Forced Entertainment* (co-ed., 2004) and *Experts of the Everyday – The Theatre of Rimini Protokoll* (co-ed., 2008). He is a member of the advisory board of DasArts – Master of Theatre, Amsterdam. Florian Malzacher lives in Zagreb and Graz.

Rabih Mroué was born in Beirut. He is an actor, director, playwright, and contributing editor for *Kalamon* and *TDR*. He is a co-founder and board member of the Beirut Art Center (BAC) and recipient of the Artist Grant for performing arts from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts – New York (2010) and the Spalding Gray Award (2010). His works include: *Photo-Romance* (2009), *The Inhabitants of Images* (2008), *How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool's Joke* (2007), *Make Me Stop Smoking* (2006); *Looking for a Missing Employee* (2005); *Look into the Light…* (2004); *Who's Afraid of Representation?* (2003), Biokhraphia (2002); *Three Posters* (2000), *Extension 19* (1997).

Hans-Ulrich Obrist joined the Serpentine Gallery as Co-director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects in April 2006. Prior to this he was Curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris since 2000, as well as curator of museum in progress, Vienna, from 1993-2000. He has curated over 200 exhibitions internationally since 1991, including *do it*, *Take Me, I'm Yours* (Serpentine Gallery), *Cities on the Move*, *Live/Life*, *Nuit Blanche*, 1st Berlin Biennale, Manifesta 1, and more recently *Uncertain States of America*, 1st Moscow Triennale and 2nd Guangzhou Biennale (Canton China). In 2007, Obrist co-curated *Il Tempo del Postino* with Philippe Parreno for the Manchester International Festival and since 2005 has been curating the *Marathon* series of public events. His publications include *A Brief History of Curating* and *The Conversation Series*.

Dan Perjovschi is a visual artist mixing drawing, cartoon and graffiti in artistic pieces drawn directly on the walls of museums and contemporary spaces all over the world. His drawings comment on current political, social or cultural issues. He has played an active role in the development of civil society in Romania, through his editorial

activity with *Revista 22* cultural magazine in Bucharest, and has stimulated exchange between the Romanian and international contemporary artistic scenes. He has had exhibitions in New York, Portugal, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Switzerland, Sweden, Great Britain. He is currently living and working in Bucharest, Romania.

Christine Peters lives and works as a freelance curator in Frankfurt/Main. From 1992-1998 she was project director and from 1998-2003 artistic director at Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt/Main. Since 2004 she has been working as a freelance curator, dramaturge and lecturer for: festival Tanz & Theater Hannover (2004), festival Theater der Welt, Stuttgart (2005), festival steirischer herbst, Graz (2006), Richard Siegal/The Bakery (since 2006). She was artistic advisor for Tanzplan Deutschland on curatorial issues (2008-2009). She was curator for the festival Theater der Welt in 2010 and of the participatory exhibition *The barrier-free museum* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Admont as part of the Regionale (2010). She lectures interdisciplinary practice and curatorial approaches at the Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies, University of Frankfurt.

Goran Sergej Pristaš is a professor at the Academy of Drama Art, University of Zagreb (since 1994). From 1990 to 1992, he was artistic director of the SKUC theatre. In 1993 he was a dramaturge and member of the artistic council of &TD theatre; from 1994-1999 he was a dramaturge in the theatre group Montažstroj. He has written several short scripts for documentary films. As a dramaturge, he participated in numerous dance and theatre productions. He is program coordinator at the Centre for Drama Art (CDU) since 1995 and was president of the CDU board from 2000-2007. He was the founder and editor-in-chief (1996-2007) of *Frakcija* as well as one of the initiators of the project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000. Goran Sergej Pristaš is a director, producer, dramaturge and performer in the internationally presented artistic collective BADco and lives in Zagreb.

Dutch theatre director **Jan Ritsema** makes theatre that triggers these strange moments where thinking and performing meet. Ritsema has directed repertoire from writers such as Shakespeare, Koltès, Jelinek and Müller for large and small companies in Europe. He has dramatised novels from Joyce, Woolf, Rilke and others and collaborated with different artists on pieces such as *Weak Dance Strong Questions*, *TodayUlysses* and *Pipelines*. In 1978 Ritsema founded the International Theatre Bookshop in Amsterdam which has published more than 400 books. In 2006 he created the PerformingArtsForum (PAF), in France near Reims, an alternative artists' residency run by artists, in which some 700 international artists exchange their experiences and knowledge and create work every year.

Rebecca Schneider is the Chair of the Department of Theatre, Speech, and Dance at Brown University and teaches performance studies, theatre studies, and theories of intermedia. She is the author of *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997) and *Performing Remains* (forthcoming 2010). She has co-edited the anthology *Re:Direction: A Theoretical and Practical Guide to 20th-Century Directing*. She is a consortium editor for *TDR: The Drama Review* and co-editor with David Krasner of the book series *Theatre: Theory/Text/Performance* with University of Michigan Press. Schneider has published essays in several anthologies, including *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, *Acting Out: Feminist Performance*, *Performance and Cultural Politics*, *Performance Cosmologies*, *Performance and the City*, and the essay "Solo Solo Solo" in *After Criticism*.

Mårten Spångberg is a performance related artist living and working in Stockholm. His interests concern choreography in an expanded field. With the architect Tor Lindstrand he initiated International Festival, an interdisciplinary practice merging architecture and choreography/performance. He initiated the network INPEX in 2006. Since 2008 he is the director for the MA program in choreography at the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm.

Virve Sutinen is the general manager and artistic director of Dansens Hus in Stockholm since 2008. Since 2007 she has also acted as the president of IETM, and chaired The Expert Group for the Modules Network Funding and Mobility Funding. Sutinen was earlier the director of Kiasma Theatre and in charge of the performing arts program at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki. She is also the director of URB, Urban Festival Helsinki, and was artistic co-director of the Dancing in November Contemporary Dance Festival in Helsinki in 2004 and 2005. She curated the exhibitions *ARS01 Unfolding Perspectives and Process* and *Encounters in Live Situations/ Shifting Spaces* in 2003. She was also the chief curator of the *First We Take Museums* exhibition in 2005.

Hilde Teuchies is managing director of CREW (Belgium), the company of artist Eric Joris that operates on the border between performing arts and new technology. She also works as an independent expert in cultural affairs, both at the national and European level. She has worked with a large number of Flemish performing artists and organisations and has long-standing experience in international touring and cultural co-operation, cultural policy and cultural networking. For seven years, she was the first co-ordinator of IETM, the largest European network for the performing arts. From 2003-2009, she was a member of the Advisory Committee for Multidisciplinary Art Centres and Festivals for the Flemish Minister of Culture (Belgium).

Tea Tupajić lives and works as a theatre director and author in Zagreb. After studying theatre directing and radio art at the Academy for Drama in Zagreb, she was artist-in-residence at Tanzquartier Wien in 2009. She is currently collaborating on projects with Jan Ritsema and working together with Petra Zanki on *The Curators' Piece* which will premiere in 2011.

Elke Van Campenhout (Brussels) is a researcher and writer. After working as a dance and theatre critic for the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard* and the radio, she edited the performance magazine *Etcetera*. Since 2007 she has been working as the co-ordinator of the research program a.pt (advanced performance training, part of a.pass: advanced performance and scenography studies), an international research project aimed at artists and theoreticians who want to work out their proposals in a collaborative and self-organized environment. She works on different research projects internationally, in collaboration with (among others) Master of Choreography Amsterdam, Tanzfabrik Berlin, Belluard Festival Fribourg, RITS Brussels.

Beatrice von Bismarck is a professor of art history and visual culture at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig. From 1989-1993 she worked as a curator of the Department of 20th Century Art *Städelschen Kunstinstitut*, Frankfurt/Main and until 1999 she taught at Lüneburg University, where she also became co-founder and co-director of the project-space *Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg*. In Leipzig she is also co-founder of the project-space */D/O/C/K-Projektbereich* and initiator of the M.A. Program *Cultures of the Curatorial* which started in autumn 2009. Current research areas are: modes of cultural production connecting theory and practice; curatorial practice; postmodern concepts of the "artist". Beatrice von Bismarck lives in Leipzig and Berlin.

Petra Zanki studied comparative literature and French and received her M.A. in Theatre Studies from the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris. She is co-founder of the artistic organizations Banana Guerilla and eksscena platform. As performance and dance maker she worked together with Britta Wirthmüller, Oliver Frljić, Montažstroj, Shadowcasters, Via Negativa. Currently she is working together with Tea Tupajić on *The Curators' Piece* which will premiere in 2011.

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